

ISLAMIC INSIGHTS: WRITINGS AND REVIEWS

Dr. John Andrew Morrow

Preface by
Hector Manzollilo

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The Covenants of the Prophet Foundation
2415 Hobson Road
Fort Wayne, Indiana
United States, 46805

www.covenantsoftheprophet.org

www.johnandrewmorrow.com

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In memory of my esteemed father-in-law, the wise and noble patriarch of our family, al-Hajj Moha Bejja (1929-2008)

In memory of my sister-in-law Mama Bejja (1955-2010)

To my esteemed mother-in-law, Lalla Fatima, my cherished wife, Rachida, my beloved sisters-in-law, Nezha, Fatiha, Zhor, and Khadijah, and all the members of the extended Bejja family, our Amazigh clans and tribes, and all the Imazighen

To Abu Sufyan and Hulwani, the missionaries of Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq in the Maghreb

To our Masters Idris I and Idris II and all the Idrisids who proudly professed the tripartite testimony of faith.

To ‘Ali ibn Warsand, al-Hasan ibn Warsand, and Muhammad ibn Warsand, the missionaries of Imam Musa al-Kazim in the Maghrib

To Hamidah al-Barbariyyah, also known as Lu’lu’ah, the Berber wife of Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq and mother of Imam Musa al-Kazim, who was one of the great female scholars of Shi‘ism taught by Sixth Imam

To Najmah Khatun, also known as Tuktam, Umm al-Banin, and Tahirah, the Berber wife of Imam Musa al-Kazim, and the mother of Imam ‘Ali al-Rida, a leading female scholar of Shi‘ism who was taught by Hamidah al-Barbariyyah

To Sammanah, also known as Sayyida, the Berber wife of Imam Muhammad al-Taqi, and the mother of Imam ‘Ali al-Naqi

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About the Author

Dr. John Andrew Morrow is a professor, research scholar, and author. He has worked as an Assistant and Associate Professor at numerous universities, including Park University, Northern State University, and Eastern New Mexico University. In the Fall of 2011, he acted as professor of Spanish, English, and Religious Studies in Islam for the Institute for Shipboard Education's prestigious Semester at Sea Program, which is academically sponsored by the University of Virginia.

Dr. Morrow completed his undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of Toronto, where he received an Honors B.A. in French and Spanish, as well as an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Spanish American Literature. It was at the University of Toronto that Dr. Morrow studied the history of Muslim Spain, the *kharjas*, and *Aljamiado* literature, as well as the Arabic influence on Spanish and French literature. After completing his Ph.D. in Canada, Dr. Morrow pursued post-doctoral studies in Arabic in the United States and Morocco.

At all stages of his studies, Dr. Morrow has combined Hispanic Studies, Arabic-Islamic Studies, and Native Studies. Besides being trained by Hispanists, Arabists and Orientalists, he has studied the Islamic Sciences for decades, both independently, and at the hands of a series of Sunni, Sufi, and Shi'ite scholars. Exegesist, linguist, traditionist, theologian, jurist, herbalist and historian, as well as philosopher, poet, author, artist, and spiritual wayfarer, Dr. Morrow embodies the best of both modern Western and traditional Eastern educational traditions.

A prolific, internationally recognized research scholar, Dr. Morrow has hundreds scholarly, literary and artistic publications to his credit in over a dozen countries and in several different languages. His academic work has appeared in *Intercultural Communication Studies*, *Sufi: A Journal of Sufism*, *The Humanities Journal*, *Romance Notes*, *The Canadian Journal of Herbalism*, *Texto Crítico*, *Alharaca*, the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, *Nueva Revista del Pacífico*, *LEMIR: Revista Electrónica sobre Literatura Española Medieval y del Renacimiento*, *Tinta y Sombra*, *The Canadian Modern Languages Review*, and the *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies*, among other scholarly publications.

Dr. Morrow's journalism has appeared in *Radiance Magazine*, *Jafariya News*, *Iran Daily*, *The Exponent*, *Revista Ariadna*, *Revista Árabe*, *The Iranian*, *al-Bawaba*, *Crescent International*, *The Message International*, *Mahjubah*, *Qué Pasa Magazine*, *Hispanos*, *Kauzar*, and other publications. His poetry has appeared in *Revista Oxígeno*,

Revista Voces, Los Lobos de Omaña, Divague, Escáner Cultural, Almiar, El Otro Mensual, El Cid, Le Message de l'Islam, Mahjubah, and Analecta Literaria, among other literary journals.

Dr. Morrow has contributed encyclopedia chapters on the history of Latinos in South and North Dakota for *Latino America: State by State*, edited by Dr. Mark Overmyer-Velazquez, as well as a chapter on the history of Arabic literature for *The Cultural History of Reading*, edited by Dr. Gabrielle Watling. He has also contributed chapters on César Vallejo and *The Arabian Nights* for *The Literary Encyclopedia* and a chapter on “The Impact of Global English on the Arabic Language” for *Global English: Issues in Language, Culture, and Identity in the Arab World*, edited by Dr. Ahmad al-Issa and Laila Dahan.

Dr. Morrow has authored, edited and translated a multitude of academic books, including: *Arabic, Islam, and the Allah Lexicon: How Language Shapes our Conception of God*, *Shi'ite Islam: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy*, *Amerindian Elements in the Poetry of Rubén Darío: The Alter Ego as the Indigenous Other*, *El islam shiita: ¿ortodoxia o heterodoxia?*, *Amerindian Elements in the Poetry of Ernesto Cardenal: Mythic Foundations of the Colloquial Narrative*, *Humanos casi humanos*, *The Book of Unity: Kitab al-Tawhid*, *The Encyclopedia of Islamic Herbal Medicine*, as well as *Religion and Revolution: Spiritual and Political Islam in Ernesto Cardenal*. Besides many other projects, he is currently editing *Islamic Imagery: Studies in Sacred Symbolism* and devoting most of his energies to completing a monumental, multi-volume work, on *Shi'ism in the Maghreb and al-Andalus*.

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I would like to thank all the professors, scholars, and shaykhs who shared their knowledge with me over the past two and a half decades. I am most grateful to my friends and colleagues, Barbara Castleton and Hector Manzollillo for constantly reviewing, correcting, and editing my works. I am especially grateful to all my publishers for allowing me to reproduce my works in this medium and most honored that Ansariyan Publications has accepted to support this ambitious academic enterprise. Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my family for their loving support in the toughest of times.

Prologue

I accepted this opportunity to write a brief prologue to Dr. John Andrew Morrow's *Islamic Insights: Writings and Reviews* because I consider it a valuable contribution to the critical study of Islam. As readers will undoubtedly acknowledge, the author of this cogent series of essays casts himself into the eye of the storm where he scrutinizes, with serenity and attention, all of the various phenomena, both positive and negative, which have surged from this powerful movement over the course of the centuries.

In exploring many controversial subjects, the author has approached his articles from a decidedly intellectual angle. In my opinion, there are two main types of thinkers: theoretical intellectuals, and practical intellectuals. The first type of intellectual is entirely theoretical. Although he is concerned with providing a body of critical ideas which will be of benefit to humanity through their application, the theoretical intellectual pays little to no attention to facts, daily life and evidentiary material, approaching ethical, moral, educational, and economic issues in an abstract way. The second type of intellectual, however, is the practical or functional intellectual who insists on linking his studies to existing social reality.

While we certainly do not wish to dismiss those intellectuals who focus exclusively on theoretical matters, in my view, the scholars who focus on application make the most important contribution to society. Since most intellectuals are either theoretical or practical, the rare combination of both qualities makes for an extraordinarily valuable individual. These balanced intellectuals are critical because our body of knowledge expands, not only from their analysis and application of ideas, but also through their mistakes and misdirection from which many important lessons can often be learned. When it comes to the realm of ideas, it is the effort or *ijtihad* that counts, and not necessarily the outcome. As a philosopher used to tell me, "The world advances as a result of aberrations." There is some truth to that. As this is a prologue, and readers will be eager to engage with the author's exposition, I shall limit myself to submitting mercifully short reflections.

For starters, and on the basis of the criteria I have already expounded upon, I would like to categorize Dr. John Andrew Morrow as both a theoretical and practical intellectual. As a rare representative of intellectual equilibrium, he theorizes, discerns, analyzes, catalogues, defines and determines on the basis of abstract principles without ever losing sight of the environment in which he and other personalities and concepts

operate. Rather than remain in a purely philosophical mode, one which is detached from reality, Dr. Morrow clearly attempts to focus on issues which contribute to the common good and which clarify critical socio-historical issues. Far from floating on philosophical clouds or dragging himself in the dirt of populism, the author operates fluidly on an intellectual platform of profoundly balanced parameters. In short, Dr. Morrow is that rare scholar whose vision can bridge the demands of the practical intellectual with the sensitivity of the theoretical intellectual.

With unrelenting courage which few possess, the author deals directly with issues. He does not engage in vague generalizations to avoid pointing fingers and naming names. In the parlance, he hits the nail right on the head and takes no prisoners. While maintaining the highest scholarly standards, he never hesitates to call things by their names and apply concrete details and description to objectionable ideas and individuals, something which is easily observable in chapters such as “What’s in an Arabic Name?” and “The Arabic Language: A Weapon against Islam?” With fearless resolution, he throws himself headfirst into an ocean of social, educational, linguistic, religious, political, ideological, and philosophical disputes, swimming prudently but with agility, without mental shackles of any kind that would sink him to the bottom of the sea.

It is equally important to point out that, unlike some authors, Dr. Morrow does not approach Muslim issues with fossilized stereotypes, prejudice or antiquated, rigid, ideas from centuries past. On the contrary, he presents issues in their entirety without consideration for Western or Eastern “political correctness,” irrespective of how they may be perceived by so-called “experts” and self-professed “authorities,” whether they wear ties or turbans. Dr. Morrow deals with every aspect of every issue seriously and meticulously. For the author, there is no place for vague definitions, capricious interpretations or platitudes. This is especially evident when he focuses on parts of the world which pretend, through some strange cognitive contortions, to seek to free themselves from the imprint of Islamic culture and civilization.

Similarly, when Dr. Morrow addresses political issues affecting the Islamic world, he does so with solid knowledge of the subject matter, free from sterile shackles, abstractions and pointless preconceptions. This intellectually open approach is clearly demonstrated in chapters such as “Strategic Compromise in Islam” and “Like Sheep without a Shepherd: The Lack of Leadership in Sunni Islam,” essays which are deeply grounded in the best of the Islamic intellectual tradition. Although the author writes with

ease and expresses his thoughts lucidly, producing works of such quality is no easy feat as they require a rare combination of substance and style.

When we contemplate *Islamic Insights: Writings and Reviews*, we are confronted with a work in which multifaceted subjects do not devolve into banality or stereotypes. In this volume, the author addresses the most varied topics with the required depth and gravity without resorting to the idly complicated language of certain writers who seek to show-off their dubious erudition. When it comes to Morrow, his pen produces works of considerable scope with a simplicity which is accessible to the ordinary person. Unlike those who claim to be of “Muslim origin” on the basis of their ancestry, Morrow, as an academic, directs himself to a Western public in a Western language. As a person who has been immersed in the West since his childhood, he understands Western thought perfectly well. As a Westerner, the author is compelled or driven to use a certain methodology, as can be observed in the methodical and current integration of statistical studies, standards that many Muslims reject when dealing with key issues, preferring to stick with rigged or dated data. The author’s use of statistics is especially evident in chapters such as “Social Justice in Islam.”

It should also be highlighted that the author addresses, without stridency or emasculating cowardice, the well-known subject of “Islamic terrorism.” Although advocates claim objectivity, the “war against terror” is used as a battering-ram by many who seek to unscrupulously attack Islam. Although these critics are well-aware that Islam does not represent any real military danger to the Western world, they oppose it vehemently because they fear its social and spiritual message which threatens their economic and political interests.

Last, but certainly not least, Morrow categorically cuts down the cliché of Arab superiority over non-Arabs in relation to Islam, an oft-repeated idea which is accepted as truth for the mere fact that it has been underhandedly upheld, espoused, and encouraged, by individuals who are ignorant of the human condition and cultural and racial diversity. This concept, which is essentially racist and discriminatory, and is always expressed indirectly, has nothing to do with the teachings contained in the Muslim holy book. In fact, this idea is especially characteristic of individuals of Arab origin who, posing as scholars of Islam and men of learning, assert that they are the only ones authorized to interpret the Qur’an. Other individuals, who are non-Arabs, but whose ancestors have been Muslims for centuries, have also fallen into the same trap, believing that Arabs are some sort of “chosen people” and Arabic is “the language of Allah.”

This unproductive and limiting trait, which is typical of many self-proclaimed “Arab Muslims,” as if it were something to be proud of, has done a great deal of damage to Islam. Since the overwhelming majority of Muslims are non-Arabs, claims of “Arab superiority” and “racial pride” are especially annoying and offensive because, in reality, it reveals an Arab inferiority complex or *tara* as Amin Maalouf would say. These Arabs, who exhibit “air of superiority” when dealing with fellow Muslims, are quick to explain their “concept of inferiority” when dealing with non-Muslims. The situation is as alarming as it is distressing. While this group treats non-Arab Muslims with arrogance, contempt, and disdain, they pathetically humiliate themselves in the presence of non-Muslims from the West. As a result of his courageous authorship, Dr. John Andrew Morrow demonstrates clearly and deftly the un-Islamic nature of this mindset, not through hot air, but rather, through a work that is distinctly praiseworthy.

Whether one is interested in one or all of the subjects addressed by the author in this book, and whether or not one agrees or disagrees with the points of view of the author, the ability he exhibits in their development will not go unrecognized.

Hector Manzollilo

Buenos Aires, Argentina

Preface

Anthologies of academic articles are traditionally reserved for retired professors as a mark of their emeritus status. It typically takes an entire career in academia to produce sufficient scholarship to create a volume of any size. There are those who may count it as brash and premature that I have compiled this collection of commentary and opinion in less than the requisite thirty to forty years. I can only blame the vibrant and compelling times we live in and a personal commitment to use my knowledge to advance the conversation. Thus, this volume represents only a small portion of the scholarship and research that has held me in thrall for so many years. This work focuses on issues arising from the growing interest in and, in truth, misinformation about Islam and the language that gave birth to the belief. Because there can be too much of even a good thing, it fails to incorporate an equally sizable body of scholarly writings related to Hispanic and Amerindian affairs.

When considering the quality of this work, readers should be reminded that it includes a combination of academic, scientific, and journalistic articles. These writings, which range from popular speech to erudite exposition, include essays written at the secondary, undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate levels of my education. As such, each article should be appreciated according to its time, which I have included, and place of production. Though some critics may question the inclusion of such early pieces, they are integrated into the whole in order to reveal an ideological evolution and the precocious nature of aspiring penmanship.

The most important contribution of this work, however, is that it brings together articles that appeared in a wide array of publications, many of which are difficult, if not impossible, for the lay person to obtain. With the support of Ansariyan Publications, along with the permission of my previous publishers, over forty of my writings and reviews will now be available in a single source. It will ultimately be readily available through bookstores and university libraries worldwide. While much has been published and more has been produced, there yet remains much to be written. It will be my pleasure to contribute to the vast scholarship on many subjects.

Dr. John Andrew Morrow

Moulay Idris Zerhoun, Morocco

Chapter 1

The Future of the French Language in Light of French Anti-Islamism¹

The recent moves by the French government to ban the Islamic headscarf have outraged defenders of human rights throughout the world. Under the guise of secularism, the French want to eliminate all “religious symbols” from the public sphere. In Islam, however, the *hijab* is not merely a “symbol,” it is a religious obligation. Nonetheless, the French government, with full support, wants to force Muslim women to unveil themselves in government buildings, force them to swim in bathing suits with strange men, and have them consult male doctors instead of female ones--against their will--all in the name of encouraging integration, assimilation and secularization. Secularism, of course, is merely the pretext being used in a vain attempt to stem the tide of Islam in France. Secularism is the division between Church and State. It does not mean that freedom of religious expression is abolished.

France, which was once a bastion of liberalism and tolerance, has been veering increasingly towards the right. The policies and rhetoric coming from France nowadays seem more in line with a repressive authoritarian state than a liberal democracy. In the past, it was extremists like Jean-Marie Le Pen who spoke of an “Arab invasion.” Now, even the French Ombudsman who headed the commission on secularism, Bernard Stasi, says that “There are forces in France seeking to destabilize the republic and it is time for the republic to act,” reminiscent of the Serbian anti-Islamic conspiracy theories that led to the genocide of 200,000 Bosnian Muslims.

The fact of the matter is that the French are threatened by the increase of Muslims in their country and feel that their future is in jeopardy. As a result, they want to deal with the “Muslim problem” before it becomes too hard to handle. Surely, none but the naïve would believe that Islam is not being singled out by Jacques Chirac’s legislation on secularism. The ban on “ostensible displays” of religious symbols like the crucifix and the Jewish skullcap--which have never been at the center of any controversy--were merely added to make the legislation more palatable to those who would denounce it as discriminatory, as is the expansion of the legislation to cover political symbols, including the Palestinian *keffiyeh* and images of Che Guevara.

¹ This article was originally published in *The Message International* (March 2004): 43-45.

The French government, with its antagonistic attitude towards Muslims, is playing with fire. Its new legislation on secularism will only serve to further alienate Muslims and encourage segregation and ghettoization. Many Muslims will remove their daughters from the public school system, home-school them or send them to private, perhaps even Islamic schools; animosity will increase and so will religious extremism. The French, however, who are so attached to their language, seem to have overlooked the possible linguistic ramifications of their new legislation which can easily be interpreted as a “declaration of war” against Islam. If the French language has not ceased to lose power, influence and prestige in the world, the xenophobic policies of the French government will only contribute to this current for, as a matter of fact, the future of the French language is in the hands of the very same Muslims that they mistreat.

According to Camilo José Cela, the famous Spanish writer, the four languages of the future are Chinese, English, Spanish and Arabic. Linguists calculate that between 50 to 90% of the 6000 language spoken in the world today will disappear within the next century. With more than 885 million speakers, the future of the Chinese language is certainly solid. Although it does not have much influence outside of its borders, it is destined to play an increasingly important role as it opens its market to the outside world. English, the most powerful political and economic language on the planet, is spoken by 594 million people and is the only language that has native speakers on every continent. Spanish, with its 332 million speakers in more than 20 countries, has a bright future thanks to the imperialistic ambitions of the Spanish conquerors which spread the language from Mexico to Argentina. Arabic, with its dialectical divergences, is spoken by 206 million people in over 25 countries in the Maghreb, Africa and the Middle East. Classical Arabic is the liturgical language of over 1.5 billion Muslims. It is the official language of Islam which, according to the forecasts of many scholars, will be the next world culture. The French language, however, is far behind and in decline, having fallen from one of the most important political, economic and cultural language of the world during French colonial times, to the 9th most common language in the world with 172 million speakers--3.5 % of the world population-- spread over Europe (44%), the Americas (7.5%), Africa, Asia and Oceania (48.5%).

While the popularity of English and Spanish continues to grow, the popularity of French continues to decline. In the United States, Spanish has been the most popular second language since the 70s. Out of the 6 million students in grades 7-12 who study foreign languages, 65% of them study Spanish and only 22% of them study French. At

the university level, Spanish represents 53% of all language enrolment. The popularity of Arabic has increased enormously since September 11th. Between 1998 and 2002, the number of students studying Arabic grew by 92.5%.

In Canada, even though French is protected as an official language, English continues to make inroads due to the low fertility rate of French Canadians and a policy of multiculturalism that has opened the doors of the country to immigrants who adopt English, the language of power, instead of French, the language of the minority. In 1951, French Canadians made up 30% of the population, in 1991, 24%, in 1996, 23.5% and in 2002 a mere 22.9%. At this rate, the French language and culture will disappear from Canada within the next century unless drastic measures are taken to protect them.

In the traditional lands of the French language like France, Belgium, Switzerland and Québec, the mortality rate of the natives is higher than the birth rate. As a result, native French speakers are gradually exterminating themselves by lack of procreation. To replace them, traditionally francophone nations have been obliged to “import” immigrants from around the world and teach them the language as the only hope of preserving it. If these immigrants speak French, they do so as a second, third or fourth language. They are not francophones, but rather allophones, as they are called in Canada, since they speak neither French nor English as a first language. In France and Canada, the percentage of immigrants has increased tremendously. In 2001, 5,335,000 individuals, or 1/6th of the Canadian population, spoke languages other than English or French. In France, North African Muslims now make up 10% of the population. In Belgium, 57% of children that are born in Brussels are Muslims.

The French government’s paternalistic attitude towards its ex-colonies has already started to backfire. Algeria, the most important francophone country after France, left the Francophony, dropped French as an official language, removed it from the school system, replaced it with Arabic and English--the language of “progress and technology”--and turned its back on France. Algeria’s decision was a disastrous blow for the French language and represents a potential loss of over 20 million francophones--many of whom speak better French than Arabic--in a country of over 30 million.

Although the relationship between Morocco and France has often been sour, Morocco has always had excellent relations with the U.S. In fact, it was the first country to recognize American independence and Washington remembers this fact very well. Morocco has been looking increasingly towards its North American friend and ally, anxious to sign a free trade agreement. If Morocco succeeds in establishing extensive

commercial ties with the U.S., it may easily abandon the use of French and encourage the teaching of the English language, amounting to an eventual loss of some 14 million francophones in a country of almost 32 million people.

If North Africa is reconsidering the use of the French language, the French-speaking countries of Sub-Saharan Africa are doing the same. The anti-French attitude in Ivory Coast is not an isolated case but rather a representative expression of nations angry with the French meddling in their economic and political affairs. In many parts of the French-speaking world, more and more disillusioned voices are warning the French: “Beware! Otherwise, we will drop French and adopt the English language.”

Whether it is in Europe or in the Maghreb, Africa or the Middle East, the future of the French language is in the hands of Muslims. Of the 172 million francophones in the world, Europe represents 76 million, many of which are Muslims; the Maghreb, Africa and the Middle East represent 78 million, virtually all Muslims. In France, Muslims represent 10% of the population or 6 million people in a population of 60 million. Muslims are particularly well represented in certain regions of France. In Ile-de-France, Muslims are 35% of the population; in Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur, they are 20%; in Rhône-Alpes they are 15% and in Nord-Pas-de-Calais they are 10%. In Belgium, Muslims represent 5% of the population in a country of 10 million inhabitants.

Outside of France, the countries with the highest number of francophones include Algeria, Canada, Morocco, Belgium, Ivory Coast, Tunisia, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Switzerland, half of them countries with Muslim majorities. In North Africa, there are 35 million francophones (62% of Tunisians, 67% of Algerians and 43% of Moroccans), 99% of which are Muslims.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, there are another 40 million mainly Muslim francophones. There are 18 African countries where French is the official language or one of two official languages. Muslims are strongly represented in the International Organization of the Francophony. In fact, out of the 51 members of this organization, 19 of them are nations with Muslims majorities: Albania, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Ivory Coast, Egypt, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lebanon, Mali, Morocco, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Tunisia.

The time has come for Muslims to use the French language as a weapon or, to be more precise, to stop using the French language as a weapon. Muslims can easily prefer English over French or insist with pride on speaking their own languages and not the

relics of their colonial masters. The majority of French speakers in the world are Muslims and they have the power to preserve, protect and promote the French language or condemn it to oblivion. It is high time for this message to reach Paris: “Do not speak to us of liberty, solidarity and fraternity when you take away our human rights and our dignity.”

Chapter 2

Language Study as an Indicator of Foreign Policy²

While there are many ways of gauging the direction of a nation's foreign policy, language study is an area that is often overlooked but which can be particularly revealing. Take, for example, the recent ads that appeared in the Chronicle of Higher Education advertising positions for instructors of Modern Standard Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, French, Dari, Korean, and Serbian / Croatian. Such ads would not draw much attention were they coming from most public or private universities. However, in this case, they were placed by the Defense Language Institute in Monterrey, California, which specializes in teaching languages to students from the four military services.

The Defense Language Institute employs over 1,000 full-time instructors on a year-round schedule to teach 3,000 students. That's a student-faculty ratio of 3:1! Classes are limited to a maximum of 10 students who attend classes six to seven hours a day. Faculty members work in teams and each team teaches the same students throughout their course, which varies in length by language from 25 to 63 weeks, with the shorter courses covering European languages like French and the longer courses covering complex languages like Modern Standard Arabic.

During a 63 week course in Arabic, which is just over one year, students have over 2000 contact hours. In a regular academic program, students studying Arabic complete 120 contact hours per year for four years for a total of 480 contact hours. If regular university students take one Arabic class per summer, they can complete the 480 hours within 2 years. However, unlike French and Spanish languages --where students can attain fluency in three to four years-- Modern Standard Arabic is a language like no other that can easily take eight years to master and it does not stop there. Students can easily spend their entire lives studying the complexities of that wondrous Semitic language. With the intensive Arabic language program at the Defense Language Institute students can learn the Arabic language in a little over one year as opposed to the decade it would take under normal circumstances.

The language specialists from the American military receive far more exposure to the language than students who follow the regular route. Whether they are better prepared to handle themselves with a higher degree of fluency is difficult to discern as

² Originally published in Spanish as "La enseñanza de idiomas y la política exterior" in *Revista Cultural Ariadna* (April 2004), the article was translated into English and published as "Language Study as an Indicator of Foreign Policy" in *Iran Daily* (Dec. 7th, 2004) as well as "Amoo Sam beh madreseh miravad: Defense Language Institute Program as an Indicator of U.S. Foreign Policy" in *The Iranian* (Dec. 7th, 2004).

the retention rate tends to be poor when learning a language so rapidly. Nonetheless, in terms of intensity, there is no other language program that offers courses that are even remotely similar to those offered by the Defense Language Institute.

The American military's focus on the Arabic language is tied to its interests in Iraq and the U.S. government's goal of "redrawing the borders of the Middle East." The interest in Chinese is linked to the contentious issue of Taiwan. The interest in French focuses mainly on black Africa where French is the lingua franca and where American forces may soon become more involved. The interest in Dari, the Afghan dialect of Persian, demonstrates a continued commitment to military efforts in Afghanistan. The focus on Dari, as opposed to Pashto, the other official language, is logical since it serves as the means of communication between speakers of different languages in Afghanistan. The interest in Korean focuses on North Korea which continues to be a thorn in the sides of Uncle Sam. The U.S. is waiting impatiently for the death of the North Korean despot or the internal collapse of his totalitarian regime since the only other way to defeat a Maoist dictator would be through a blitzkrieg. The interest in Serbo-Croatian, which is really a politically contrived name for Bosnian, is linked to American military activities in the former Yugoslavia. Most interesting of all, however, is the interest in the Persian language, perhaps the result of auspicious signs coming from the inside of Iran.

Chapter 3

What's in an Arabic Name?³

For some people, names do not mean a thing. For others, they are extremely important. In reality, names are more than arbitrary symbols: they convey character and express identity. Every name has a meaning, represents a life, a mode of identification, and every time it is employed its meaning is reinforced. It is for this reason that the Prophet Muhammad said that it was the responsibility of parents to give good names to their children. The impact of names is profound: both consciously and subconsciously. A child who is given a good name is off to a good start in life while a child who is given a negative name may be off to a bad one. If you call your dog "Stain," don't be surprised if he ends up soiling your carpet. If you call him "Thunder," he may end up barking excessively. And if you name him "Hitler," "Stalin" or "Mussolini" he may become a dangerous dog. As we can see, it is not difficult to understand that names are of utmost importance, something which has been corroborated by religious scholars, sociologists, and psychologists.

In the Western world, we rarely make associations between names and the individuals they identify. In many cases, however, the name of a person is a bona fide reflection of his/her character, personality, and mentality. The name "Fidel" suits Castro very well, since he has always been very "faithful" to Communism. The name "Ernesto," which means "serious, determined, and honest," is an eloquent description of Che Guevara, the heroic guerrilla fighter, and the great martyr of Latin America. Marechal Josif Broz, the former Communist dictator of Yugoslavia, was nicknamed "Tito," a modern form of "Titus," the name of Titus Flavius Vespasianus, the implacable Roman imperialist. In Italy, we have the case of "Casanova," namely, "New House," the prototype of the womanizer who was always going from house to house in search of a new sexual conquest. Speaking of womanizers, it is worth mentioning that Minister Martin Luther King, Jr., the African American leader whose name comes from the leader of the Protestant Reformation. His contemporary, Malcolm X, adopted the Muslim name "Malik" when he converted to orthodox Islam. In Arabic, "Malik" means "King," a title worthy of this African American prince who awoke the consciousness of oppressed blacks. In Old English, the name "Winston" signifies "victory." In its Anglo-Saxon form,

³ This article was originally published in Spanish as "¿Qué hay en un nombre árabe?" in *Revista Árabe* (Dec. 2004): www.revistaarabe.com. It is published here for the first time in its English translation. As Roberto Mustafa Ale, the editor of the magazine, wrote, "These types of articles enrich us and are very useful to us Arabs."

“Wystan,” the word means “war stone.” Both definitions aptly describe Winston Churchill, the legendary British leader from the Second World War. And let us not forget Mustafa Kamel who adopted the title of Atatürk, namely, “Father of the Turks.”

In many cases, people are actually the opposite of their names. Take, for example, the case of Madonna, the shameless American singer who bears the name of the Virgin Mary. “With a name like Madonna,” Louise Verónica Ciccone commented, “I had two options in life: to be a nun or to be a slut.” As she recognized herself, “I did not choose to be a nun.” Such is the case with girls named “Chastity.” Either they become nuns, or they become prostitutes or porn stars. In recent years, Madonna has renamed herself “Esther,” in honor of the beautiful Persian Jew, in order to manifest her conversion to Judaism and her fascination for the Kabala. Whether she calls herself Madonna or Esther, her unchaste behavior is an affront to both of these names and the religious traditions they represent.

Although it is easy to make associations between names and people in our languages, it is impossible to do so in languages which we do not master. Given the importance of the Arabic-Islamic world in international politics, it is worth the while to survey some of the most famous personalities to see how they reflect their names. Starting from the early days of Islam, we had the tyrant Yazid, whose name means “Add.” Due to his love for alcohol, he was given the title of “Yazid al-Khamr” or “Add Some More Wine,” a humorous name applied to this infamous and degenerate Umayyad Caliph. In more recent times, we have had three Egyptian leaders with curious names: Anwar Sadat, which means “The Most Radiant of the Nobles,” which correctly conveys his popularity in the Arab world; Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir, “The Handsome Slave of the Victorious;” and Hosni Mubarak, “The Blessed Good Guy,” which seems like a paradox considering the damage he has done to his country.

In Saudi Arabia, a country dominated by despotic dictators, we have the Fahd family, whose last name means “puma.” In the Islamic Republic of Iran, we had Khomeini, whose name “Ruhullah” means “Spirit of Allah,” a manifestation of the mystical dimension of this great revolutionary leader. In Syria, we had Hafiz al-Asad, whose family name, means “the Lion,” and who was responsible for the massacre of ten to thirty thousand sympathizers of the Muslim Brotherhood in the city of Hama and the disappearance of tens of thousands of people. In Palestine, we had the indefatigable Yasir Arafat, whose name comes from the Arabic verb “yassara,” which means “diplomatic” or

“one who facilitates.” In fact, he spent his entire life struggling for the Palestinian people and trying to facilitate the creation of a state for his dispossessed and stateless people.

In Iraq, we had Saddam Hussein, whose name means “one who wounds, hits, and pushes around,” “violent blow,” “stubborn,” and “the cause of scandal,” names which capture well the thirst for blood of this war criminal who was responsible for the deaths of one million people during the Iraq-Iran War as well as tens of thousands of Iraqis: both Kurds and Shi‘ites. His now deceased and equally infamous sons, Uday and Qusay, were named “Wolf” and “Snake.” As the saying goes: “Like father, like son.” In Libya, the Greatest Popular Arabic Republic, we have the infamous Mu‘ammar al-Qaddafi. In colloquial Arabic, his name means “Loaded,” like a loaded gun, an excellent description for this volatile revolutionary and master of mercenaries. Dhikra al-Dali, the Tunisian singer, died tragically, when she was murdered by her Egyptian husband, Ayman Sadiq. As her name “Dhikra” indicates, nothing remains of her but “Memories.” The name “Shakira,” which means “grateful,” captures perfectly well the innocent sensuality of this succulent Lebanese Latina who torments heterosexual men from every hemisphere. As we can see, in both East and West, names reflect the ones that they name. As such, it can be truthfully told in any language: “Tell me your name, and I will tell you who you are.”

Chapter 4

The Arabic Language: A Weapon against Islam?⁴

In the United States, language study has always been motivated by practical reasons. The number of students interested in the Arabic language grew spectacularly after September 11th, 2001, with record numbers of students enrolling in Arabic courses at American universities at the dozen or so language institutes located in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Yemen.

The University of Utah offered an intensive language program in the summer of 2000 with eighty students. In the summer of 2003, there were 300 students enrolled in the program, most of them studying Arabic, while a few focused on Persian, Turkish, and Hebrew. At Middlebury College, where intensive summer courses attracted 60 to 70 students, the amount of students increased to 130 during the summer of 2002.

According to Michael Katz, the Dean at the School of Languages at Middlebury College, “Typical American higher education is a reactive process. Something happens like the Cold War and gosh, we better start studying Russian. Then there’s 9/11 and everybody starts studying Arabic.” As he acknowledges, “Arabic has blossomed since September 11, 2001. The demand for Arabic is enormous.”

As a result of increased interest in studying Arabic, Middlebury College, as well as most universities with similar programs, was obliged to hire many new instructors to satisfy the demand. In 2002, for the first time since its foundation in 1982, Middlebury had to start accepting applications as early as the month of April. In many institutions of higher learning, the demand for Arabic is greater than the demand for Spanish, the second most important language in the United States after English.

Although Katz avoids giving precise details, he admits that many of the new students are members of the secret service and the armed forces. Kate Swearingen, who attended the intensive Arabic program at Middlebury in the summer of 2002, relates that:

There were the State Department types who, in the short term, are aiming to pass the Foreign Service examination. In the long term, they want ambassadorships and houses in Georgetown. There were the academics--anthropology and comparative literature doctorate students who want to learn Arabic to conduct independent research. Rounding out the group were the military people, fresh out

⁴ This article was originally published in Spanish as “El idioma árabe en camino de convertirse en un arma contra el Islam” in *Revista Cultural Ariadna* (Oct. 2003): <http://www.ariadna.cjb.net>. Its English translation is published here for the first time.

of the Defense Language Institute in Monterey and service duty in Bahrain, who stoically awaited the arrival of the dormitory's elevator so they could descend the two floors to the lobby en masse.

On the basis of my experiences studying Arabic in the U.S. and abroad, I can confirm that many of the Americans who are studying the language are members of the military, aspiring Orientalists, CIA spies, mercenaries, and Christian missionaries. While many Arabic students in the U.S. are undergraduates, most of the students studying at language institutes in the Arab world are graduate and post-graduate students. A minute percentage of Arabic students are highly secularized Arab Americans or cultural Muslims in search of their roots, as well as the rare committed Muslim who is studying the language for religious reasons.

Many of the students who started to study Arabic after September 11th were seeking immediate benefits. It is evident that they believed that knowledge of Arabic would "open doors" for them after the lamentable and deplorable attack against the Twin Towers and the World Trade Center, and that they wanted to take advantage of the opportunity. Prior to 9/11, the few students who studied Arabic tended to have a direct interest in the language and culture. After the tragic events of 2001, however, the atmosphere in Arabic language classes changed to a great degree with enmity and even open hostility being expressed against Arabs, Islam, and Muslims. Insulting the Islamic faith became the order of the day, as well as mocking Muslim beliefs and practices. Students started to openly express their hatred of Arabs and asserting that the Arabic language was "sexist" because are masculine or feminine as opposed to neuter. Some expressed their desire to "change" Arabic culture, expressing supremacist ideas that would give a stroke to Claude Levy-Strauss. Not only was the cultural richness of the Arabic world not appreciated, it was viewed with contempt. The concept of cultural relativity is ignored or rejected, perhaps because students believe it has something to do with Levi Strauss, the Bavarian immigrant who invented jeans in 1873.

This attitude of contempt towards Arabs and Muslims, combined with perfidious ambitions, has converted Arabic students into perfect targets for intelligence agencies. As Swearingen does not hesitate to reveal:

The CIA recruiters were also at Middlebury, in full force. They courted the Chinese and Russian school students, but the students in the Arabic program were the big game. Arabic specialists get \$30,000 a year for the privilege of

sitting behind a desk and translating foreign newspapers. Because, you know, Osama bin Laden publishes all his top-secret plans on the front page of *al-Watan*.

Mahmoud Abdalla, the director of Middlebury's Arabic school, is more forthcoming than his dean, Michael Katz, and admits that a number of government agencies visit the campus to recruit Arabic students. According to Abdalla, there has been a big turnout of recruiters coming primarily from the CIA, FBI, and other government offices.

The Arabic students from the universities of Texas, Utah, and Kansas, all confirmed to me that, without exception, they had all received letters from the CIA after completing their first year of studies. I found it quite odd that no such letters were ever mailed to the few practicing Muslims who were studying Arabic. It may be that a healthy attraction for Islam, or even simple respect for the Muslim faith, disqualifies a potential candidate.

In reality, it is a shame that American interest in the Arabic language is so superficial, and that it is intrinsically tied to political, economic, and military motives. Although the United States is a great country in which to live and work, with many liberties and job opportunities, it does not pay sufficient attention to cultural matters. In fact, the US does not even have a Ministry of Culture as Canada and many of the poorest nations of the world possess.

In general, Americans prefer to spend their money on sports rather than a play, a spectacular musical, a concert of classical music or a good museum. In some cities, they have to offer free admission to museum in order to draw visitors. Many people are willing to pay hundreds of dollars to see a football game, but they are not willing to spend five dollars to enter an excellent art gallery. Americans travel little outside of their country. Most of them are monolingual and their newscasts contain little to no international news. As a result, Americans are a provincial, even parochial, people, many of whom believe they are the center of the universe and that the entire world revolves around them. Although the U.S. is one of the countries with the highest level of literacy in the world, it paradoxically possesses one of the lowest levels of culture in the world. Although the country has great institutions, universities, and libraries, there remains a vast void in the cultural arena. Despite its advances in science and technology, many cultured people view the United States as the Mecca of Ignorance, something which is quite serious, since ignorance engenders intolerance. If the U.S. is both ignorant and

arrogant, and lacks the tact that the French and the English demonstrated in the past, it will never have long term success in the Arabic-Islamic world.

When the French and the English commenced their imperialistic adventures, they reasoned perfectly well that in order to control a people, and to dominate a people, one had to understand them. Consequently, they placed a great deal of interest in the languages, literatures, religions, and cultures of those they were colonizing. In 1798, Napoleon brought a large group of learned people to Egypt, including botanists, zoologists, geologists, sculptors, painters, poets, linguists, chemists, mathematicians, architects, sketch artists, and geographers, and many others. As a result of the research conducted by this group of scholars and scientists, a twenty volume report, titled *Description de l'Égypte*, was redacted. One of the main goals of French Orientalists was to build cultural bridges and ties of solidarity with the Egyptians. At the beginning of the twentieth century, they published books on Arabic grammar, produced courses on colloquial Arabic dialects, compiled bilingual dictionaries, and even developed courses in various Berber languages. French Orientalists exhibited an insatiable thirst for knowledge about the Near East and translated a multitude of classical Arabic works into the French language. The magnitude of the work that they accomplished was so monumental that it would take various volumes to simply provide a cursory glance. There is no question that contemporary American Orientalists pale in comparison with the French and English Orientalists from the colonial period.

Napoleon, with great cunning, identified his interests as those of the Egyptians. When he invaded Egypt in 1798, he told them that he had arrived to implement the *shari'ah*, namely, the Islamic legal system. He used to read the Qur'an, and even wrote that "There is no god but Allah" in his personal copy. He covered Cairo with flyers that said that Allah is the Greatest and that he had come to liberate the Muslim people from the Mamelukes. In Cairo, during a meeting with dignitaries and religious leaders at the University of al-Azhar in July of 1798, he publicly professed to be a Muslim. After embracing Islam, he adopted the Muslim name 'Ali. Napoleon's conversion to Islam was featured in page 61 of *Le Moniteur*, the official French newspaper of the period. Acting as a Muslim, he prohibited French officers from drinking alcohol in public; he prohibited them from harassing women; and forbade them to enter mosques. All of the decrees made by French administrators commenced with the words, "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah." His council even passed a fatwa (or religious edict) declaring that Napoleon was the Mahdi, the Awaited Savior, and affirmed that

there were twenty Qur'anic verses which referred implicitly to him. He explained his concept of government in the following terms:

My policy is to govern people as they majority wish. By becoming Catholic, I put an end to the War of Vendée; by becoming a Muslim, I established myself in Egypt; by becoming ultramontane, I won the sympathy of Italy. If I ruled a nation of Jews, I would reestablish the Temple of Solomon.

When he left Egypt in 1799, he brought with him a variety of books on Islamic jurisprudence which would form the foundation of his famous Napoleonic Code, promulgated in 1804, and which now forms a fundamental part of the legal systems in various countries throughout the world. He never hesitated to adopt whatever was of benefit from Islamic civilization.

The English, on the other hand, manifested the same yearning to acquire cultural knowledge. English Orientalists focused their attention on language study, completing translations, and authoring half a dozen Arabic textbooks and grammars. They never attempted to replace the Islamic, Hindu or African legal systems. Rather, they sought to use them whenever possible. English tribunals in India were ordered to apply Islamic or Hindu law, depending on the religion of the parties, in such areas as marriage, divorce, and inheritance. In Africa, British law was only applied when local circumstances allowed for it.

The agents of European imperialism often went to the extreme of converting to Islam in order to be more convincing. One of the most famous of these agents was Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890), the explorer, linguist, scholar, soldier, anthropologist, and author. He spoke 25 to 30 languages and 40 dialects. He published more than 50 books about his journeys, three grammars of Oriental languages, five volumes on folklore, becoming especially famous for his translation of *The Thousand and One Arabian Nights*. Jacques Menou (1750-1810), a general in Napoleon's army, converted to Islam, adopted the name Abdullah-Jacques Menou, and then married Sitti Zoubeida, an Egyptian Muslim woman who descended from the Prophet Muhammad.

As a result of the efforts they made to understand the people they were conquering, the French and the English were able to occupy foreign lands for over a century. The former dominated 65 million people in their colonies while the latter controlled 470 million in theirs. The French controlled Algeria from 1830 to 1962 and Tunisia from 1883 to 1956. The English, on the other hand, dominated India from 1776

to 1947. If the Europeans succeeded in dominating other nations for more than a century, it was because they had a certain degree of culture and capacity.

As a result of its arrogance attitude and cultural imposition, the United States manifests a lack of interest in Arabic-Islamic culture. When the U.S. government promotes the study of the Arabic language, it does so to fill its ranks with spies and militaries that can operate in regions where the language is spoken, and to train anti-Islamic Orientalists and Christian missionaries so that they can continue to weaken and subvert Islam. In other words, Americans have no interest in improving ties with the Muslim world, understanding its beliefs, way of life, knowledge, science, wisdom, and mode of thinking. For Americans, learning Arabic is something practical. Case in point: when American soldiers arrived to the Persian Gulf, they were armed with colloquial Arabic-English dictionaries which contained the most important vocabulary they would need: to kill, to interrogate, to torture...

The only way the United States can control the Muslim world is by means of force because it is devoid, in many regards, of culture and political maturity. The French and the English took the time needed to understand other cultures so that they could present themselves as “friends” with the object of controlling them. The brutal attitude and approach of the United States, however, undermines its objectives in the Arabic-Islamic world. Rather than draw people into its orbit, U.S. foreign policy incites them to turn away. Rather than win the friendship of Muslims, the U.S. seeks to dominate them. Rather than build bridges of understanding, they destroy the few existing ones as the carpet bomb entire countries while tossing spare change and scraps to the survivors as an act of Christian charity. As a result of U.S. foreign policy, Muslims receive Americans soldiers with hostility, rather than welcoming them with flowers. Rather than greeting them with *marhaba* (or welcome) for having “liberated” them, they seek refuge in God, and exclaim with tears in their eyes: “The Yankees have arrived!”

Chapter 5

In the Name of Allah: Reverence Phrases in Arabic⁵

Until February of 2006, Yahoo.com would not permit user names containing the word Allah. In a written statement and in interviews, the eminent internet corporation maintained that their purpose in limiting such names was due to “[a] small number of people [who] registered for IDs using specific terms with the sole purpose of promoting hate.” Upon request and reflection, they have rescinded that ban, and now Yahoo users can be found under the name of Allah, just as they can for God, Jesus, Buddha, and other divine luminaries. This move brings the internet into line with other sources, published materials, programs, flags, songs, and poetry that use Allah out of reverence and devotion. And so it has been for nearly fifteen centuries, when the first suggestion was made to use words and phrases acknowledging Allah.

Within the Qur’an itself, the holy book of all Muslims, an extensive variety of verses charges true believers to always honor and exalt Allah in all of their speech and actions. So pronounced is this habit of Arabic speakers that the phrase *Insha’ Allah*, for example, meaning “If Allah wills it,” is recognized world-wide as a caveat within any statement regarding future events. “We will leave for vacation on Friday, *Insha’ Allah*,” comments the contented employee. In this case, the vacation is planned for Friday, reservations have been made, the car gassed up, and the time allotted by the employer. Yet, the Arabic-speaking Muslim and non-Muslim alike assert that all of that preparation will be for naught, should Allah determine something else will occur. *Insha’ Allah* is not, as many Westerners believe, a fatalistic fail-safe through which people can escape responsibility. Rather, it is an acknowledgement of the ultimate arbiter of what will and won’t happen on earth and in the heavens.

Anyone who has lived in the Arab world has an anecdote of the American or European supervisor reminding a Muslim employee to have the report ready by 2:00 pm tomorrow or to be sure to arrive at the conference site three hours early or to complete the data entry by the end of work today. In every case, the Muslim replies “*Insha’ Allah*,” and the supervisor, mentally pulling at his hair, insists, “No, I really mean it.” “Of course,” replies the employee, “*Insha Allah* it will be so.” The supervisor is left thinking the employee has just manufactured a divine excuse to avoid an obligation, while the

⁵ This article, which was authored by my colleague, Barbara Castleton, and co-authored by myself, was previously published in *Islamic Horizons* (November/December 2009): 54-55.

employee believes he has just made a firm commitment to complete the task at hand. And *Insha' Allah* is merely one example of how Arabic is flowered with references to Allah, whether via a phrase of thanks, an exhortation for assistance, or an acknowledgement of divine capacity.

To call words from this Allah Lexicon pervasive in Arabic is to underestimate their power and presence in the life of Arabic-speaking Muslims. So embedded are they that you will find them adorning flags, as in the case of the Saudi Arabian flag, government stationary, and embroidered decorations and plaques for the home. News anchors in many Middle Eastern and North African locations begin their reports with a reference to Allah, as do speech makers. Song writers and performers invoke some of the ninety-nine names of Allah repeatedly in both classical and popular verse. Poets and novelists such as Albert Camus invest their words with allusions to the deity.

Studies have demonstrated that native-Arabic speaking Muslims and non-Muslims may use one or another of these phrases dozens of times every day: before eating, after eating, when greeting someone or bidding them goodbye, when washing, before praying, during a business transaction, when expressing sympathy or condolences, when making plans, in the face of victory or disaster, and before sleeping, to name just a few general areas of usage.

So intertwined is this bonding that Arabic is considered a holy language, a language through which divine lessons and concepts were originally disseminated and interpreted. This assertion rests on the fact that the Qur'an was delivered to the Prophet Muhammad in Arabic and that it was put to paper in that language as well. Therefore, the words of the Qur'an and the language that served as vehicle are partners, inseparable.

Yet, Westerners, exemplified by secular-is-sacred France and in the U.S., are suspicious of this collection of religious phrases, believing that discourse ought to have separate arenas for religious speech and everyday speech. To further this philosophy, France is developing a variety of programs wherein public school instructors will teach Arabic to students of Middle Eastern and North African descent but without the body of language that performs courtesies, queries, and makes statements through the use of phrases such as *Masha' Allah*, *Bismillah*, *Alhamdulillah*, *Allahu 'alam*, *Wa Allah*, and hundreds of others. This is akin to teaching English and leaving out all references to sports. The learner would have a language gap around all things baseball: "up to bat," "first base," "home run," "team," and "three outs" would be just that, out. University

leaders in France support this secularist view, suggesting that devotion to Islam should be expressed in France differently than it would be back home, wherever that might be.

Just as French schools do not allow young Muslim women to show modesty by wearing a head-scarf to class neither do their Arabic instructors reveal the treasure of tradition and culture that lie within the Allah Lexicon. To acquire this deeper level of language, students must go to a specialized Arabic institute or an Arabic course attached to a mosque. This last option is one which the French government is trying to avoid, since learning Arabic under the auspices of the neighborhood imam serves to cement the relationship between Arabic and Islam.

In the U.S., when a Muslim student quietly asked God's grace before giving a speech in her college class, she was reprimanded by her instructor. In another situation where Arabic itself was found guilty, Dr. Teresa Whitehurst reported on a multicultural-week event in an East coast high school. All week long, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited in different languages by a cross-section of students.

One day, the pledge was given in Spanish, and dozens of voices were raised in unison. Another day, they intoned the pledge in French. However, the day a student group began to give the pledge in Arabic, protests loud, long, and focused, arose among the same students who had chorused the verse boldly on every other day. Somehow, placing loyalty to the flag in the same context as the Arabic language, and including a phrase reflecting devotion to Allah, had become anathema. For the students in that school, Arabic was viewed as an unworthy vehicle for the Pledge of Allegiance.

This attitude of intolerance toward the Arabic language and its inherent religious speech has resulted in the diminution of use of such phrases by Arabic-speaking Muslims living in the U.S. In statements to researchers, Arabic speakers state that there is no linguistic frame or acceptance of this usage in English, nor a level of conversational safety in which *Allahu Akbar*, *Subhana Allah*, or *Fi amanillah* could be inserted.

To ask a Muslim to forego the words which tie his or her life to Islam, Muhammad, and the Qur'an is to ask them to breach the dictates of their religion, heritage, and linguistic custom. Where English, French, German, or Chinese all have individualized speech act phrases or required vocabulary for utilization in polite society, only in Arabic is God, or Allah, the center of many of these linguistic functions. Indeed, through an extensive study of the language corpora of over a dozen languages, scholars have determined that reference to God occurs more often in Arabic than in any other major language.

This preeminence of the Arabic word for God within the language arose along with the birth of Islam itself. Arabic scholars have long known that even as the Prophet Muhammad delivered the word of God to the people, he asserted a need for a change in the language to match the new divine revelations. A whole new category of phrasing and word usage evolved even as the teachings were being dispensed and Islam was promulgated among the peoples of the sands and beyond.

Words that formerly served to honor pagan gods or man's achievements were eradicated in favor of a new lexicon of words and phrases that bespoke the omniscience, omnipresence, and limitless power of God. Muhammad's call for new terminology mirrored the word of Allah. Within the Qur'an and the Hadith there exists an extensive selection of verses and statements which encourage believers to honor Allah in all areas of their life. In the Qur'an, Allah says: "O you who believe! Remember Allah abundantly" (37:75). In the Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad says: "For everything there is a polish and the polish for hearts is the remembrance of Allah" (Bukhari). Every utterance of these phrases brings the believer closer to God, and, it is to be hoped, closer to an adherence to God's law.

So intertwined is the bonding between religion, language and word, that Arabic is considered a holy language, a language through which divine lessons and concepts were originally disseminated and interpreted. The Qur'an was delivered to the Prophet Muhammad in Arabic, and its chapters were put to paper in that language as well. Therefore, the words of the Qur'an and the language that served as its vehicle are immutable partners.

Yet, in English language culture there is little tolerance and less linguistic space for the lexical collection that allows Arabic-speaking Muslims to express their caring, piety, and compassion in conversation. When asked if she ever said *Insha' Allah* aloud in English, a young Arab school-girl in southeast Ohio responded, "Oh, no, I just whisper it to myself." Millions of immigrants find themselves in the same position. How can they avoid the tension which comes from even uttering words in Arabic while maintaining their intimate connection to God and Islam?

More and more, as Arabic speakers try to live in America, among people who consider "Arabs" and "Muslims" as "terrorists," the rich expressions from the Allah Lexicon are disappearing from their speech, and with them, a profound connection to the spiritual. Surely, this is a dilemma which demands the attention, and wisdom, of Solomon.

Chapter 6

The Impact of Globalization on the Arabic Language⁶

Globalization, modernization, and secularization bring considerable benefits, technologically, politically, and economically. Their encroachment, however, by means of mass media and popular culture, may also undermine existing socio-linguistic structures. In the case of Arabic, this means, diminishing the depth and breadth of the Allah Lexicon. This lexicon is the rich and varied body of hundreds, perhaps thousands of religious expressions which form a unique feature of the Arabic language, including *insha' Allah* [God willing], *alhamdulillah* [Praise be to God], *subhan Allah* [Glory be to God], *masha Allah* [It is the will of God], *baraka Allahu fik* [May God bless you], *jazaka Allah khayr* [May God reward you], *fi amanillah* [Go with God], *inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un* [From God we come and to Him is our return] and a multitude of others. Considering the importance of the Allah Lexicon in terms of linguistic, cultural, and religious identity, we have examined the effects of globalization on the Lexicon, issues of cross-cultural transferability, as well as the consequences of alienating language policies, all of which compromise cultural and linguistic diversity. Based on a review of the literature, as well as fieldwork conducted among Arabic-speakers at home and abroad it becomes evident that secularization is placing the stability of this core linguistic system in peril.

In the Arabic-Islamic world, both the Arabic language and the Muslim faith are often viewed as inseparable parts of the same Arab Muslim identity. In the words of 'Abdo A. Elkholy, "The Arabic language is an inseparable part of Islam" (Turner Medhi, 1978, 109). As Desmond Stewart (1968) explains, "[t]he Arabic language is more than the unifying bond of the Arab world; it also shapes and molds that world" (14). Since Arabic is the language of the Qur'an and Muhammad, the Messenger of God, "it has an even greater effect on its speakers than other languages have on their speakers" (14). Speakers of Arabic and those who read it via their devotion to the Qur'an recognize the language as directly dispensing Allah's word and law, as well as the words of the earliest disciples of those pronouncements. Through the Allah Lexicon, those who are directly connected to Arabic have absorbed a repertoire of divine sentiment into their daily speech, assigning Allah's influence over every area of their lives. The array of items

⁶ This article, which was co-authored by my colleague Barbara Castleton, was previously published in *Intercultural Communication Studies* XVI 2 (2007) 202-212. It is available online at: [www.uri.edu/~16%20John %20A.%20Morrow%20&%20Barbara%20Castleton.pdf](http://www.uri.edu/~16%20John%20A.%20Morrow%20&%20Barbara%20Castleton.pdf).

within the Allah Lexicon demonstrates this component of identity as it is exhibited both by elective and affective elements of lifestyle. As Hetherington (1998) explains, “The terms ‘elective’ and ‘affective’ can be directly connected to religious identification, given that a religion is both a chosen feature of a lifestyle and one intended to give voice to emotion and mirror a response to it” (49). This tie, between Arabic and Islam, has not gone unnoticed. In fact, it has been readily understood by those who seek to undermine it.

With the fall of Granada in 1492, the “Muslim Question,” needed to be addressed. What was to be done with the millions of Muslims in Spain? The answer came quickly: forced conversion to Catholicism through the destruction of everything related to the Islamic identity. This left Muslims with two choices: leave Spain or practice pious dissimulation or *taqiyyah* (Watt, 1965, 182). Among the prohibitions enacted were bans on Islamic dress, ritual baths, prayers and fasting, the pilgrimage to Mecca, and paying *zakah*. At the fore, however, was the prohibition to either speak or write Arabic, for which the penalties were severe: “thirty days in prison in chains for the first offense, double the sentence for the second offense, and for the third offense men were given a hundred lashes and four years in the galleys while women and youths under seventeen were given four years in prison” (Thomson, 1989, 295). The persecution of secret Muslims was so severe that “[t]he parents could not even afford to say Allah in the presence of young children,” who were kept ignorant of Islam at least until the age of reason, for fear that a childish indiscretion might betray the whole family (284). Severed from Arabic, the secret Muslims were cut off from the Qur’an. While they lost their language, the Moriscos retained the Arabic script for writing in Spanish, a mark of the religious significance of the script and their determination to affirm their cultural identity as Muslims (López-Morillas, 1994, 17). With time, however, the knowledge of the Arabic script was also lost. The only thing that remained in their hearts was a silent affirmation of *La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadun Rasulu Allah*, without knowing experientially the meaning of what they secretly believed (Thomson, 1989, 285). Due to this loss of personal religious experience over the generations, the knowledge of Islam among these secret Muslims became severely limited, facilitating their gradual assimilation into Catholicism and the eventual elimination of Islam in Spain.

This same desire to eliminate Islam through the elimination of Arabic was demonstrated by Western powers when they colonized the Arabic-Islamic world. According to Darwish al-Jundi, “The imperialists...were aware of the influence of the Arabic language...They fought it and tried to replace it with their own languages. They

also attempted to develop colloquial and regional dialects, hoping thereby to stamp out classical Arabic” (Laffin, 1975, 67-68). In most Arabic-speaking countries, some secularized politicians or writers have advocated converting the regional dialect into the official language and relegating classical Arabic to ruin. In every case, this has failed, due in large part to a profound Arabic-Islamic identity.

In non-Arab countries, where the bond to the Qur’an was limited to similarities in script and language differences made access to its significance more difficult, efforts to further distance Muslims from their scripture have been more successful. In Turkey, for example, Kemal Ataturk eliminated the Arabic alphabet and replaced it with a Latin-based one, effectively ensuring that future generations of Turks would not be able to read the Qur’an in its original Arabic without the substantial effort required to learn the script. In Iran, the Shah commenced a campaign to “purge” the Persian language from Arabic loan-words and planned to replace the Persian alphabet, of Arabic origin, with the Latin one. His design to subordinate the Arabic script was viewed as an attempt to alienate the Iranians from the Qur’an and ultimately played a role in his overthrow during the Islamic Revolution of Iran.

The importance of the Arabic script extends far beyond the graphic representation of a given set of sounds by a particular set of letters (López-Morillas, 1994, 18). Whether it’s Morisco Spanish, Persian, Ottoman Turkish or Urdu, the “use of the Arabic alphabet brings with it a considerable degree of Arabization and Islamicization of the original languages” (18). Muslims in the Indian subcontinent have been very conscious of this fact. Since Urdu, in its written form, used the Arabic-Persian alphabet, it is perceived as having great symbolic importance. As a result, the educated Muslim elite have viewed any opposition to the use of the Urdu script as a threat, not only to their professional positions, but also to Islamic culture in general (Minault, 1978, 456). If attempts have been made to undermine Islam by eliminating the Arabic alphabet, attempts are now being made to undermine Islam by depriving it of its essential religious expressions.

In the Western world, the Allah Lexicon appears to be under attack by both malevolent and benign forces. In the case of France, a deliberate campaign of cultural imperialism is being waged against the Allah Lexicon with scholars like Paul Balta and Linda Hamoud advocating the creation of a “secular Arabic,” an Arabic language detached from Islam. According to Paul Balta (1991), the famous French Orientalist of Egyptian origin, “teaching Arabic does not go against secularism” (123). While he admits

that “Islam is an unavoidable element in learning this language” he insists that “it is possible to deal with it in secular manner” (123). According to Linda Hamoud (2004), speaking about religion in an Arabic language class poses a serious problem (67). The problem with teaching Arabic, she notes, is that it arouses interest in Islam. As she explains,

The problem revolves around the fact that from sixth grade and up the questions of students concerning the Muslim religion made to the Arabic teacher are frequent and persistent. In the context of a republican secular school system, which finds itself in direct competition with the Arabic language instruction provided by mosques, the opinions of the teacher regarding religious subjects comes into direct conflict with the teachings of the Imam. In fact, he has a natural authority on these types of subjects and, as a result, Arabic instructors find themselves unprepared to respond to students’ questions.

The solution to this problem, according to Hamoud (2004), is to use and diffuse: to deal with a religious sequence from Arabic television, addressing and analyzing images and elements so that students “avoid getting hit in the face with the religious message” (68). The goal, she explains, is “to show students that intertextuality goes beyond the words pronounced by the Shaykh” (69). Hamoud (2004) explains that religious discourse is based on “emotions and rarely on human reason” (69) which is why it should be avoided. Balta (1991) warns that “If public schools do not offer the possibility of learning Arabic, parents turn to associations, often of religious inspiration, which are even more difficult to control” (123). As a result, he greatly encourages the French government to provide Arabic language instruction at all levels, from elementary school to university. In doing so, of course, “Arabic must not be considered as a religious language” (123). He feels that if the teaching of Arabic was valued as part of the national educational system, “it could be a powerful instrument encouraging secularism and integration” (123). In fact, he feels that if the state feigns support for the Islamic culture of the students, they would not feel the need to use religious symbols like the *hijab* to express their differences. Balta does not hide “the French Solution” to “the Muslim Problem.” When asked whether a secular Islam will be born in Western Europe, he explains that a new generation of secular Muslim intellectuals can serve as an example and “prepare the post-Islamist era” (330). This would permit Muslims to continue, if they wish, to practice their religion within the confines of secular republicanism while ensuring that nothing stops them from ceasing to believe or to change their beliefs (330).

The French policy with regard to the Islamic presence in the Arabic language and culture is to deflect it. Considering the fact that language cannot be meaningfully studied outside of the context of culture, the desire to create a “secular Arabic” poses serious pedagogical problems. It is politically-motivated pedagogy aimed more at attempting to secularize French Arabs than to teach the Arabic language.

In the rest of the Western world, the attack against the Allah Lexicon is more subtle, the influence of popular culture, secularization, globalization, and modernization, rather than overtly aggressive governmental policy. Due to discrimination, fear of persecution, stereotyping, the inability to find work, Arab and Muslim immigrants to the Western world have a long history of assimilation. Along with a consistent pattern of derision of Islam, there exists the currently promoted belief that there is something inherently violent buried within the history and essence of the religion, a violence totally distinct from Christianity’s own history of Crusades, slaughters, Inquisitions, and forced conversions (Hassan, 1995, 1-7). Riding in tandem is a corresponding suspicion of the language itself which, paired with ethnic discrimination, leads young Arabic-speaking boys and girls to hide their heritage, refuse to speak the language of their parents and grandparents and take on names like Sam instead of Sulayman, or Abe instead of Ibrahim. As a result of all of these factors, Ronald Taft (1989), Desmond Cahill (1989), Saed Bader Dweik (1980), Ghazi Shorrab (1986) and ‘Abdel Fattah Bani Hani (2001) have all shown that Arab children have a high rate of language erosion and attrition. As Beverlee Turner Mehdi (1978) has observed, Arabs are characterized by the fact that they are so easily assimilated into American and Western culture (viii).

As we have established in our book *Arabic, Islam, and the Allah Lexicon*, religious expressions form a vital and required feature of the Arabic language. They have been dictated by Allah in the Qur’an and the Prophet in the Sunnah. In response, tradition has found countless circumstances and formations for its delivery. Some of these phrases, reminders of Allah’s power, characteristics, capacity and identity have been seen to appear in conversation multiple times each day in venues from the marketplace to the television news. In fact, Arabic religious expressions are so common that the language counts Allah as its most common content word. You simply cannot effectively and legitimately teach Arabic without including Islamic expressions. As Harrell, Abu-Talib, and Carroll (2003) explain,

It is an important cultural pattern that compliments or words of praise should be accompanied by a deferential reference to God. Without the reference to God,

such statements appear crude, and in older, more traditional social circles, they are taken as bad omens which bring misfortune. References to God of this sort are usually not directly translatable into English. (352)

One of the fundamental differences between both languages is that in English the word “God” is usually restricted to either oaths, both profane and serious, or to formally serious situations (331). Arabic, on the other hand, “employs references to God and to religion in general, in a wide variety of everyday situations” (331). El-Sayed (1991) notes that “[a] failure to grasp the often subtle differences between first language and target language formulas can lead to serious misunderstandings and misjudgments” (1). As Eirlys Davies (2000) explains,

Learners with a good mastery of the pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary of a language may nevertheless be extremely unsuccessful in their interactions with native speakers of that language if they do not have some understanding of their norms of politeness; indeed, as would be the case with stylistic errors in general...it is likely that the more proficient learners are in other aspects, the greater will be the danger that their failure to use the appropriate strategies may be perceived, not as evidence of lack of proficiency, but rather as a sign of disrespect, hostility, or other negative attitudes. (76)

She further warns that the inappropriate use of religiously-based Arabic politeness expression may be perceived as abrupt or impolite (80). Arabic-speakers rarely say *shukran* or thank you, typically opting for the religious *barakallahufik* “May God bless you” or *jazaka Allahu khayran* “May God reward you.” A mere *la* or “no” can be terribly rude in Arabic culture where the polite response to a request one cannot or will not grant is *Allah yu'tik* or “May God give you” based on the Qur’anic verse “And even if thou hast to turn away from them...speak to them a word of kindness” (17:28). You may not have given them what they want, but at least you gave them a blessing. Even basic greetings and salutations are religiously-based. As Khalid S.A. Hassanain (1994) warns in his article “Saudi Mode of Greeting Rituals,” “[v]iolations of...social greeting rituals lead to undesired consequences or to a provocation of violence resulting in misunderstanding or misinterpreting of the verbal and non-verbal behavior in the Saudi setting” (68). Clearly, you cannot communicate proficiently in Arabic without a mastery of religiously-prescribed expressions. Consequently, you cannot teach Arabic without considering Islamic culture. As Joshua Fishman (1996) has said, Arabic is a “holy language:” it cannot be separated from the religion that arose within its use (11).

While Arabic religious expressions continue to be widely used in daily discourse in the Arab world, the local variations of the Allah Lexicon are being reduced due to the influence of the Arabic mass media, particularly on women. In Oman, for example, while older people, especially women, often use *ta'aqqabna 'alaykum al-'afiyyah* [May good health follow you], *darbak khadra* [may your path be green] and *qiddaish al-Rahman* [God, the Compassionate, is before you], men appear to favor *hayyak Allah* [May God give you life] and young women tend to employ the pan-Arabic *ma'a al-salamah* as a closing exchange more than men (Emery, 2000, 208). While satellite television and the internet help spread Modern Standard Arabic, strengthening and uniting the Arabic world, they also contribute to a standardization of Arabic dialects, reducing the regional range of Allah expressions.

The major challenge to the depth and diversity of the Allah Lexicon comes from Western popular culture by means of television, movies, and music. As Ferguson has pointed out with regards to Syria, the younger generation's reduced use of Arabic politeness formulas, both in terms of formulas and complexity of patterns, may be attributed to urbanization and secularization, as well as European and American influence (68). How, then, will the Allah Lexicon, as a system of devotion and cultural consciousness, be regarded and utilized by the younger generations? In the modern world, when youth-oriented cultures are sweeping the globe, will these aspects of tradition and reverence go the way of opening doors for ladies?

While the future is uncertain, the present reality is clear: the Arabic language is undergoing a reduction in the use of Islamic, Allah-centric, expressions, which are being supplanted by simplified forms based on English and French norms. As Charles Ferguson (1983) has observed, "the profusion of thank yous, good wishes, and the like of Arabic society is being reduced to the models of French and English usage" (68). In many large Arabic cities, the greeting *al-salamu 'alaykum*, the very symbol of Islam, is sometimes viewed with contempt and its speaker dismissed as an *arubi*, a backwards peasant, by "sophisticated" Westernized Arabs who employ "Allo," "Bonjour," "Hi," and "Hello." The situation is accentuated in the Western world where a decline in the use of Allah expressions is observed among Arabic-speaking Muslims.

When faced with the loss of the Allah Lexicon, some scholars may respond with a simple "so what?" So what if the Arabic language is becoming less religious and so what if Arabs are becoming increasingly secularized. For some scholars, the loss of Islamic influence in language and culture is viewed as positive developments, the

inevitable result of linguistic and socio-cultural evolution. With the Arabic language, however, the loss of the Allah Lexicon is not part of a natural phenomenon; it is the direct result of cultural, linguistic, and political imperialism. The assault against the religious nature of the Arabic language does not come from within, it comes from abroad. Take the case of France, for example, which is promoting a politically motivated pedagogy which seeks to create a “secular Arabic.” The question begs to be asked: What rights do the French have to dictate the nature of the Arabic language? Westerners who support the suppression of Islamic expressions in Arabic should first start by suppressing the Christian expressions in their own languages. Attempting to eliminate the religious dimensions of the Arabic language is akin to suppressing the sports-related vocabulary found in American English. Teaching Arabic to prepare the “post-Islamist” era, as Balta wishes, is as unethical and subversive as teaching Spanish to prepare the “post-Catholic” and “post-Hispanic” era. Attempting to remove religious references in a language is an act of censorship, a violation of human rights, an affront against freedoms of religion and expression.

There are those that will argue that the French are doing the “right thing.” If anything, they are doing the “extreme right-wing thing.” The more the French repress the religion, culture, and language of French Arabs, the more they will become resentful and radicalized. Imagine, for instance, the case of black riots in the United States. Would starting a campaign to ban “black English” be a sensible solution? The proponents of this approach might argue that black English has got too much “soul,” that it places black children at a disadvantage at school, that it helps reinforce communalism, that it promotes gang culture, and that it entrenches racial divisions in American society.

The problem with French Arabs was created by the French. It is not the result of Islam or the Arabic language. The French Arabs have lived in France for three generations. They are French by birth, by citizenship, by language, and culture. Most of them are secular, non-observant Muslims, and many of them have even lost the Arabic language. Despite adopting Western culture, they face marginalization and discrimination to the extent that 40% of young French Arabs are unemployed. Their predicament is similar to that of blacks in the United States. In the New York City, to cite a single example, black men between the ages of 16 to 64 face a 49.2% unemployment rate (Levitan, 2004). Unlike white Americans, who have ties to their ancestral homelands in Europe, black Americans were completely cut off from Africa. They lost their religion, their culture, and their language. As such, they are entirely American. Yet despite the fact

that they are the most American of the Americans, they have faced prejudice and persecution for one single reason: the color of their skin. The problem in France is not that French Arabs refuse to integrate and assimilate. The problem is that they are prevented from fully participating in society. Considering the fact that most French Arabs are irreligious--even Balta (1991) has shown this in his book--Islam, and Arabic culture cannot be blamed for the riots in France. The answer needs to be found elsewhere. The March 15th, 2000, report from the Advisory Committee on Human Rights seems like a good start. It indicates that 70% of French people admit to having racist sentiments (Savyon, 2005).

These arguments, of course, are unlikely to convince those who are stubbornly set in their ways. For many people in the Western world, Islam is not the solution, it is the problem. This is despite the fact that vast majority of Muslims are peaceful, law-abiding people, and those who are not, are typically responding to Western foreign policy. As people who appreciate cultural and linguistic diversity, we cannot help but lament the loss of such a central component of the Arabic language such as the Allah Lexicon. Saying that the Allah Lexicon, the Arabic language, or Islam, should go, is the same as advocating the elimination of English, Hebrew, and Chinese, and that we would be better off without Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism. Erasing Islam from the Arabic language is much like the efforts of totalitarian regimes to re-write history. For us, the loss of any language, core linguistic feature, religious tradition or culture, is something which impoverishes us forever. It is more than losing a subspecies, a species, or an entire genus. It is more than losing an entire ecosystem. With every language we lose, we lose an entire world. It is something which, when it is gone, is irretrievable, rupturing a universal equilibrium.

While natural issues of language evolution may play a role in the omission of Allah phrases, the major impulse seems to be the result of globalization. The cause for the reduction in Arabic religious expressions being established, it is essential to consider its consequences in terms of religious bonds. In point of fact, the missing phrases and expletives from the Allah Lexicon mean that speakers are in limited contact with the Divine, a serious blow when one considers that Allah and Islam are the basis of Arabic-Islamic identity. The loss of Arabic in any Muslim venue, and the Allah Lexicon as an umbilical-like connection between the religion and the language, would be a loss that would indelibly alter the nature of the religion itself. The loss of the Allah Lexicon is a

loss of culture, identity, sense of self, individuality and community. It is the demise of cultural diversity and the harbinger of linguistic homogeneity.

This study relates to the issues of translatability and culture-loss addressed in the *Intercultural Communication Studies* XIV, 4 (2005) on Translation, Representation, and Identity in Intercultural Communication. In her article on “Transparency in Translating from Arabic,” Myriam Salama-Carr demonstrates how some French translations of Arabic literature distort the sense of the originals in order to render them more exotic (112). Jolanda Guardi’s article on “The Status of Algerian Literature in Italy: Between Random Approaches and the Perpetuation of Stereotypes” addresses the ethnocentric violence of translation (93). The author exposes the role of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the publication of Algerian literature as an act of cultural colonialism which seeks to assert that French is the natural language of culture and that Arabic was imposed by force (98). In his article, “Cultural Dislocation through Translation,” Said Faiq shows how many translations of Arabic literature merely serve to subvert Arab realities and Islam in order to reinforce Western culture (73). While the subversion often comes from foreign-sponsored translators, it is also the result of Arab authors who write in Arabic for the sole purpose of translation and whose intended audience is not Arab at all (67). Their works are translated into European languages, particularly English and French, reaffirming two dominant concepts: the oppression of Arab women and the myth of Islamic fundamentalism (67). In short, Said Faiq demonstrates that much modern Arabic literature, particularly in translation, seeks to support Western stereotypes and prejudices about the Arab-Islamic world. It comes as no surprise, then, that Robert de Beaugrande’s article on “Geopolitics, Geolinguistics, and Translatability,” concludes that “The Arabic language may be threatened by a translation-based trend toward an enforced modernity that could eventually compromise its identity” (13). If Salama-Carr, Faiq, Guardi, and Beaugrande have pointed out the perils posed by manipulative translations, our study has examined the wider impact of globalization, with a particular focus on politically-motivated pedagogy, namely, the French attempt to create a “secular” Arabic. Clearly, the Arabic language is undergoing a loss of important religious and cultural components. According to Tim Walters’ article, “Determinants of Cross Cultural Media Usage Patterns in the United Arab Emirates,” and which is published in this present volume, the very survival of the Arabic language is at stake in certain parts of the Arab world.

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Chapter 7

Arabic Instruction in France: Pedagogy or Politics?⁷

According to the consensus of language scholars, language cannot be meaningfully studied in isolation from context and culture. In France, however, the opposite is true, with French teachers of Arabic addressing what seems to be an unsolvable issue: how to teach secular Arabic, how to teach Arabic without directly dealing with Islam. Considering the importance of culture in the teaching of language, such an approach poses serious pedagogical problems. In essence, the French approach to teaching Arabic seeks to separate Islam from the Arabic language when these two elements form the inseparable core of Arabic-Islamic identity.

With the advent of Islam in the 7th century, the Arabic language and culture underwent a radical and revolutionary transformation. By the end of Muhammad's prophethood in 632 C.A., every tribe in the Arabian Peninsula had rejected polytheism, embraced monotheism, and placed the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, at the core of the community of believers. The Qur'an became the basis of religion, law, jurisprudence, education and language. Being the first book ever published in the Arabic language, the Qur'an established the standard of classical Arabic, the guide to good grammar, the path of eloquence, the source of style and the lifeblood of the lexicon, exerting "a unique influence on the history of the Arabic language and literature" (Nicholson xxiii). A linguistic document of incomparable importance, "[i]t was viewed as a source of grammatical and lexicographical information," "[i]ts stylistic inimitability notwithstanding, it even came to be treated as a standard for theories of literary criticism" (Rosenthal 321). As a literary monument, "the Koran...stands by itself, a production unique in Arabic literature, having neither forerunners nor successors in its own idiom" (Gibb 36). Unsurpassed in its rhetorical richness, even non-Muslim Orientalists have described the Qur'an as miraculous. Hottinger admits that when "[c]onsidered from the point of view of its Arabic eloquence, the Koran is indeed a miracle" (24). In terms of its overwhelming impact, Nasr notes that "there is...no single book that is as influential in any religion as the Qur'an is in Islam." Thanks to the Qur'an, the success of Muhammad's mission, and the spread of Islam under the "Orthodox" Caliphs, the Arabic language became the sacred language of the entire Muslim world. "Due to this single book," explains Bishai, "Arabic rose from almost complete insignificance to be the holy

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tongue of the second largest religious community in the world” (92). The language of the Qur’an is held in such high regard that many Muslims call it *lughatullah*, the language of Allah. According to Jacques Berque, “[t]he Arabic language scarcely belongs to the world of men; rather, it seems to be lent to them” (190). As a holy language, directly dispensing God’s word and law, this classical language is invested with supplementary levels and layers of implicature not always evident to the outside observer.

While Greek and Latin were infused with a new vocabulary as a result of the rise of Christianity, the saturation of spirituality into the Arabic language which took place via the Qur’an and the Sunnah with the arrival of Islam may be unparalleled in human and linguistic history. As a result, the Arabic language has become a reservoir of rich and varied idiomatic expressions invoking the name of Allah, including *insha’ Allah* [God willing], *alhamdulillah* [Praise be to God], *subhan Allah* [Glory be to God], *masha Allah* [It is the will of God], *baraka Allahu fiki* [May God bless you], *jazaka Allah khayr* [May God reward you], *fi amanillah* [Go with God] and many more. These idioms, which number in the hundreds or even thousands, are collectively known as “the Allah Lexicon,” a feature unique to Arabic and a reflection of the Allah-centricity of the Arabic language, culture and civilization.

In the Arabic Islamic world, both the Arabic language and the Islamic religion are often viewed as inseparable parts of the same Arab Muslim identity. In the words of ‘Abdo A. Elkholy “The Arabic language is an inseparable part of Islam” (qtd. in Turner Medhi 109). As Desmond Stewart explains, “[t]he Arabic language is more than the unifying bond of the Arab world; it also shapes and molds that world” (14). Since Arabic is the language of the Qur’an and Muhammad, the Messenger of God, “it has an even greater effect on its speakers than other languages have on their speakers” (14). Speakers of Arabic and those who read it via their devotion to the Qur’an recognize the language as directly dispensing Allah’s word and law, as well as the words of the earliest disciples of those pronouncements. Through the Allah Lexicon, those who are directly connected to Arabic have absorbed a repertoire of divine sentiment into their daily speech, assigning Allah’s influence over every area of their lives. The array of items within the Allah Lexicon demonstrates this component of identity as it is exhibited both by elective and affective elements of lifestyle. As Joshua Fishman has explained, Arabic is a “holy language” in the sense that it cannot be separated from the religion that arose within its use (11). This tie, between Arabic and Islam, has not gone unnoticed. In fact, it has been readily understood by those who seek to undermine it, be they the Catholic kings in

Spain, the colonialists and imperialists in the Arabic world, secular leaders like Kemal Attaturk in Turkey and the Shah of Iran, as well as French Orientalists like Paul Balta and Linda Hamoud who, despite the pervasive presence of God and religion in the Arabic language, seek to create a “secular Arabic.”

With the fall of Granada in 1492, the “Muslim Question,” needed to be addressed. What was to be done with the millions of Muslims in Spain? The answer came quickly: forced conversion to Catholicism through the destruction of everything related to the Islamic identity. Among the prohibitions enacted were bans on Islamic dress, ritual baths, prayers and fasting, the pilgrimage to Mecca, and paying *zakah*. At the fore, however, was the prohibition to either speak or write Arabic, for which the penalties were severe: “thirty days in prison in chains for the first offense, double the sentence for the second offense, and for the third offense men were given a hundred lashes and four years in the galleys while women and youths under seventeen were given four years in prison” (Thomson 295). The persecution of cryptic Muslims was so severe that “parents could not even afford to say Allah in the presence of young children” (Thomson 284). Children were kept ignorant of Islam at least until the age of reason for fear that a childish indiscretion might betray the whole family (284). Severed from Arabic, the secret Muslims were cut off from the Qur’an. While they lost their language, the Moriscos retained the Arabic script for writing in Spanish, a mark of the religious significance of the script and their determination to affirm their cultural identity as Muslims (López-Morillas 17). With time, however, the knowledge of the Arabic script was also lost. The only thing that remained in their hearts was a silent affirmation of *La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadun Rasul Allah*, without knowing experientially the meaning of what they secretly believed (Thomson 285). Due to the inability to practice the beliefs that they hid, the knowledge of Islam among these secret Muslims became severely limited, facilitating their gradual assimilation into Catholicism and the eventual elimination of Islam in Spain.

This same desire to eliminate Islam through the elimination of Arabic was demonstrated by Western powers when they colonized the Arabic Islamic world. According to Darwish al-Jundi, “The imperialists...were aware of the influence of the Arabic language...They fought it and tried to replace it with their own languages. They also attempted to develop colloquial and regional dialects, hoping thereby to stamp out classical Arabic” (Laffin 67-68). In most Arabic-speaking countries, some secularized politicians or writers have advocated converting the regional dialect into the official

language and relegating classical Arabic to ruin. In every case, this has failed, due in large part to a profound Arabic-Islamic identity.

In non-Arabic-speaking countries, where the bond to the Qur'an was limited to similarities in script and language differences made access to its significance more difficult, efforts to further distance Muslims from their scripture have been more successful. In Turkey, for example, Kemal Atatürk eliminated the Arabic alphabet and replaced it with a Latin-based one, effectively ensuring that future generations of Turks would not be able to read the Qur'an in its original Arabic without the substantial effort required to learn the script.

In Iran, the Shah commenced a campaign to “purge” the Persian language from Arabic loan-words and planned to replace the Persian alphabet, of Arabic origin, with the Latin one. The attempt to purify the Persian language of Arabic loan-words and replace the Arabic-based Persian alphabet with the Latin one was part of the Shah's “white revolution.” The Shah may have been inspired by earlier efforts by Ahmad Kasravi who attempted to promote a “Pure Persian,” replacing words of Arabic origin with others he invented (Mutahhari, Tabataba'i, Khumayni 192).

The importance of the Arabic script, however, extends far beyond the mere representation of a given set of sounds by a particular set of letters (López-Morillas 18). Whether it's Morisco Spanish, Persian, Ottoman Turkish or Urdu, the “use of the Arabic alphabet brings with it a considerable degree of Arabization and Islamicization of the original languages” (18). If attempts have been made to undermine Islam by eliminating the Arabic alphabet, French Orientalists like Paul Balta and Linda Hamoud are now attempting to undermine Islam through the creation of a “secular Arabic,” devoid of its essential religious expressions.

According to Paul Balta, the famous French Orientalist of Egyptian origin, “teaching Arabic does not go against secularism any more than learning Latin would make one a Christian fundamentalist” (123). While he admits that “Islam is an unavoidable element in learning this language” he insists that “it is possible to deal with it in secular manner” (123). For Balta, the Arabic instructor must be to the Imam what the secular school teacher was to the priest in the 19th century France (123). He warns that “If public schools do not offer the possibility of learning Arabic, parents turn to associations, often of religious inspiration, which are even more difficult to control” (123). In his view, when Muslim youth feel that the system seeks to take away their

culture, “they become guilt ridden and radicalize themselves” (122). Peter Manderville echoes this view, explaining that

[t]here is a point beyond which discrimination and rejection by the majority society results not in Muslims’ denial of their religion, but rather in its affirmation. Rejected and unwanted, they turn to that which sets them apart as a form of cultural self-assertion and a basis of identity. Islam also becomes a form of self-defense and a source of solidarity against a hostile dominant culture. (22)

As a result, Balta greatly encourages the French government to provide Arabic language instruction at all levels, from elementary school to university. In doing so, however, “Arabic must not be considered as a religious language” (123). He feels that if the teaching of Arabic was valued as part of the national educational system, “it could be a powerful instrument encouraging secularism and integration (123). He argues that if the state feigns support for the Islamic culture of the students, they would not feel the need to use religious symbols like the *hijab* to express their differences. Not only should Arabic be a means of Muslim control in France, Balta wishes to export it abroad. As he explains,

Is it not in the interest of France to provide Arabic instructors to black African countries which are in need of them? Is it not better than letting them recruit instructors from abroad who are often mediocre and influenced by the fundamentalist ideology? The approach of the French School is also a means of forging spirits. (119)

Balta does not hide “the French Solution” to “the Muslim Problem.” When asked whether a secular Islam will be born in Western Europe, he explains that a new generation of secular Muslim intellectuals can serve as an example and “prepare the post-Islamist era” (329). That’s like teaching Spanish to prepare the “post-Hispanic” or the “post-Catholic era.” According to this plan, nothing would stop Muslims from practicing their religion within the confines of secular republicanism (330). At the same time, however, nothing should prevent them from ceasing to believe or to change their beliefs (330). In other words, this is the seizure of Arabic language instruction for the purpose of promoting secularization. This sounds like something straight out of 1936 Soviet Constitution which simultaneously recognized “freedom of religious worship and freedom of antireligious propaganda” for all citizens. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, however, freedom of religion is not acquired. It is an inherent, innate, and inalienable right.

Following in the footsteps of Paul Balta, Linda Hamoud's article, "Télévision et religion en cours d'arabe," provides further insights into the French attempt to subvert Islam through Arabic language instruction. Hamoud readily admits that "there is a real problem once one speaks of religion in an Arabic language class" (67). The problem with teaching Arabic, she notes, is that it arouses interest in Islam. As she explains,

The problem revolves around the fact that from sixth grade and up the questions of students concerning the Muslim religion made to the Arabic teacher are frequent and persistent. In the context of a republican secular school system, which finds itself in direct competition with the Arabic language instruction provided by mosques, the opinions of the teacher regarding religious subjects comes into direct conflict with the teachings of the Imam. In fact, he has a natural authority on these types of subjects and, as a result, Arabic instructors find themselves unprepared to respond to students' questions.

The solution to this problem, according to Hamoud, is to use and diffuse: to deal with a religious sequence from Arabic television, addressing and analyzing images and elements so that students "avoid getting hit in the face with the religious message" (68). The goal, she explains, is "to show students that intertextuality goes beyond the words pronounced by the Shaykh" (69). Hamoud explains that religious discourse is based on "emotions and rarely on human reason" (69). As a result, it should be avoided. The pedagogical objective of this approach is not really the analysis of words but contextualization of cultural references (69). In short, the French policy with regard to the Islamic presence in the Arabic language and culture is to deflect it in an attempt to create a psychological break between Arabic and Islam, an approach which is flawed both pedagogically and philosophically, posing some serious ethical problems. Not only will such an approach alienate students of Arab ancestry, contributing to Arabic language attrition, a problem facing Arabic-speaking Muslims living outside of the Arabic-Islamic world, it will create a generation of culturally illiterate Arabic speakers. Any student of "secular Arabic" will be unable to communicate cross-culturally with native-speaking Arabs for the simple fact that virtually every politeness expression in Arabic is religious in nature. As Dimitrios Thanasoulas has explained, effective communication is more than a matter of language proficiency, it is a question of cultural competence which leads to empathy and respect toward different cultures, promoting objectivity and cultural perspicacity.

For over fifty years, language scholars have universally acknowledged the importance of teaching culture in the language classroom. This includes Lado (1957, 1964, 1986), Hall (1959), Politzer (1959), Huebener (1959), Desberg (1961), Fotitch (1961), Landar (1965), Seelye (1974, 1984), and Brooks (1960, 1968), who emphasized the importance of culture for language learning. Other important scholars include Nostrand (1967, 1974), Rivers (1968, 1981), Corder, (1968), Jalling (1968), Henle (1970), Savignon (1972), Tucker and Lambert (1972), Seelye (1974, 1984, 1988), Lafayette (1975), Saville-Troike (1975), Reynolds and Skilbeck (1976), McLeod (1976), Howell and Vetter (1976), Canale and Swain (1980), Goodenough (1981), Rivers (1981), Samovar, Porter and Jain (1981), Grove (1982), Hammerly (1982), Levinson (1983), Williams (1983), Kallenbach and Hodges (1983), Higgs (1984), Fowler (1986), and Omaggio (1986). Having accepted the importance of teaching language within the context of culture, these scholars considered ways of incorporating culture into language instruction. Some focused on sociolinguistics. Others were concerned with communicative competence and integrating language and culture more naturally. And yet others worked on enhancing the role of culture in the foreign language curriculum, producing teaching-oriented texts with detailed chapters on culture teaching for the foreign language classroom. Regardless of their individual interests, the predominant goal was now clearly established: communicating within the cultural context of the target language. These scholars were followed by the likes of Melde (1987), LaForge (1983), Valdés (1986), Damen (1987), Kramsch (1987, 1988, 1993), Robinson (1988), Odlin (1989), Preston (1989), Byram (1989), Fairclough (1989, 1995), Steele (1989), Lakoff (1990), Leiss (1990), Baumgratz-Gangl (1990), Swaffar (1992), Street (1993), Tomalin and Stempleski (1993), Kramsch (1993, 1987a, 1988), Bessmertnyi (1994), Montgomery and Reid-Thomas (1994), Byram and Morgan (1994), Cruz, Bonissone, and Baff (1995), Bruner (1996), Tavares and Cavalcanti (1996), Carter and McRae (1996), Lessard-Clouston (1997), Cormeraie (1997), Humphrey (1997), Killick and Poveda (1997), Cormeraie (1997), Henrichsen (1998), Salzman (1998), Henrichsen (1998), Singhal (1998), Straub (1999) and Wierzbicka (1999) all of who delved into the dynamics of culture and its vital contribution to language learning. Of course, this is merely a general survey on the subject of teaching culture in the language classroom meant to illustrate the universally acknowledged importance of cultural literacy.

The pedagogical problems posed by French proponents of “secular Arabic” do not reflect on Arabic language instruction in general. In fact, the methodology employed

in teaching Arabic has evolved in the same fashion as that used to teach English, French, Spanish, and other languages. The early language texts produced by the French and the British during colonial times like the *Cours d'arabe marocain* by Aldécoa, were deeply rooted in the tradition of grammar translation, a trend that continued to Richard Harrell's *Colloquial Moroccan Arabic*, Megally and Mansour's *Arabic Course Handbook* and Peter Abboud's *Elementary Modern Standard Arabic*. Although Harrell, Megally, Mansour, and Abboud followed a traditional approach to teaching Arabic, they included many cultural components. Abboud's text dominated Arabic instruction in the English-speaking world through the 70s and 80s, being replaced in the mid 90s by Kristen Brustad's *al-Kitab fi ta'allum al-'arabiyyah: A Textbook for Beginning Arabic* which contains selections of Qur'an and Hadith, knowledge deemed essential for a student of the language. A more recent book, *Ahlan wa Sahlan: Functional Modern Standard Arabic for Intermediate Learners* by Mahdi Alish equally focuses on aspects of Arabic-Islamic culture. Several other books appeared in the 90s dealing with Arabic dialects, including *Colloquial Moroccan Arabic* by Mohammed Zaim which reflects the language as spoken with its rich body of Allah expressions.

For all of these scholars, learning a foreign language also means learning a foreign culture, and culture includes religious components, particularly in the Arabic-Islamic world. Culture, of course, is not merely a repository of facts. It involves an understanding of culturally appropriate language use. As Peck has proclaimed, "Culture should be our message to students and language our medium" (1998). In order to achieve this cultural competence, Singhal states that teachers should "present students with a true picture or representation of another culture and language" (1998). The fundamental premise behind all this pedagogy is respect for the "Other" combined with a sincere desire to increase understanding. Clearly, the French approach of censoring and suppressing essential components of Arabic culture, diverting them or downplaying them, serves no sensible pedagogical purpose and can only be politically motivated. It is precisely the attitude condemned by Edward Said when he spoke of an Orientalism which served political ends. Considering the fact that France has already faced widespread riots from its alienated citizens of Arab ancestry, the French approach to Arabic language instruction makes little political and academic sense.

As pedagogically problematic as they may seem to language scholars, the opinions of Paul Balta and Linda Hamoud are perfectly in line with France's secular philosophy. Despite their motto of *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* the French seem to be

half a century behind when it comes to appreciating diversity and pluralism, appearing openly hostile to all things Islamic, including the Arabic language instruction delivered in mosques. To contain their Muslim minority, the French strategy seems clear: mind control, double speak, cultural colonialism, and ideological imperialism. An additional tactic seems to be to outlaw independent Imams, allowing only state-supported scholars; condemn conservative dress-codes in Muslim countries, yet impose a liberal one in France; condemn communalism while marginalizing Muslims; and, of course, support the study of Arabic at home and abroad while undermining its essential religious dimension, seeking to secularize it. It seems that for the French, there is no place for the Islamic religion in public schools, no place for the *hijab* on the heads of Muslim girls, and, evidently, no place for Islam in the Arabic language.

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Chapter 8

The Persian Alphabet: A Contentious Question⁸

With the Arabic conquest of the Sassanid Empire from 643-650 A.D., a new language, religion and culture were added to the Persian cultural milieu. Arabic became the *lingua franca* or, better yet, *lingua arabica*: the language of government, literature, culture, and religion. As a result, Persian, an Indo-European language, became profoundly Arabized, not so much in its grammar, but in its lexicon. According to the *Encyclopedia of the Orient*, 40% percent of Persian vocabulary is of Arabic origin. According to Gernott L. Windfuhr, Professor of Iranian Studies at the University of Michigan, nativized Arabic loan-words represent 50% of the lexicon but only 25% of the colloquial language. Over time, the role of the Arabic language was reassessed, ceased to be the official language, and was relegated to a scholarly language studied in Islamic seminaries. The influence of the Arabic language, however, continued to be seen in the high frequency of Arabic loan-words and the use of the Arabic script: both of which were eventually reconsidered.

All Muslims, be they Arabs or non-Arabs, view Arabic as a “sacred language,” the language of the Qur’an, and the language of the Prophet Muhammad. In much of the Muslim world, both Arabic and Islam are viewed as inseparable parts of the same Islamic identity. As we explain in our articles “Amoo Sam beh madreseh miravad: Defense Language Institute Program as an Indicator of U.S Foreign Policy” (The Iranian), “El idioma árabe en camino de convertirse en un arma contra el Islam” (*Revista Cultural Ariadna*) and “La enseñanza de idiomas y la política exterior” (*Revista Cultural Ariadna*) this relationship has been readily understood by those who seek to undermine it, be it in Catholic Spain, Western colonies, contemporary France, Kemalian Turkey, or Pahlavian Persia.

With the fall of Granada in 1492, the “Muslim Question,” needed to be addressed. What was to be done with the millions of Muslims in Spain? The answer came quickly: forced conversion to Catholicism through the destruction of everything related to the Islamic identity. This left Muslims with two choices: leave Spain or practice pious dissimulation (Watt 182). Among the prohibitions enacted were bans on Islamic dress, ritual baths, prayers and fasting, the pilgrimage to Mecca, and paying the poor-due. At

⁸ A short version of this article was published as “The Persian Alphabet in Peril” in *Iran Daily* (May 27th, 2006): 2 and is available online at the following site: www.nitc.co.ir/iran-daily/1385/2572/html/national.htm. The complete version of the study is published here for the first time.

the fore, however, was the prohibition to either speak or write Arabic, for which the penalties were severe, and consisted of thirty days in prison in chains for the first offense, double the sentence for the second offense, and for the third offense men were given a hundred lashes and four years in the galleys while women and youths under seventeen were given four years in prison (Thomson 285). Despite such efforts, thousands of Arabic words remain in the Spanish language, representing 8% of its lexicon.

The persecution of cryptic Muslims was so severe that the parents could not even afford to say Allah in the presence of young children who were kept ignorant of Islam until the age of reason for fear that a childish indiscretion might betray the whole family (Thomson 284). Severed from Arabic, the secret Muslims were cut off from the Qur'an. While they lost their language, the Moriscos secretly retained the Arabic script for writing in Spanish, a mark of the religious significance of the script, and their determination to affirm their cultural identity as Muslims (López-Morillas 17). With time, however, the knowledge of the Arabic script was also lost. The only thing that remained in their hearts was a silent affirmation of *La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadun Rasul Allah* [There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah], without knowing experientially the meaning of what they secretly believed (Thomson 285). Due to this loss of experiential knowledge over the generations, the knowledge of Islam among these secret Muslims became severely limited, facilitating their gradual assimilation into Catholicism, and the eventual elimination of Islam in Spain.

This same desire to eliminate Islam through the elimination of Arabic was demonstrated by Western powers when they colonized the Arabic Islamic world. According to Darwish al-Jundi, "The imperialists...were aware of the influence of the Arabic language...They fought it and tried to replace it with their own languages. They also attempted to develop colloquial and regional dialects, hoping thereby to stamp out classical Arabic" (Laffin 67-68). This policy was partially successful in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, for example, where many Muslims speak better French than they do Arabic. Imperialist language policy in the Arab world did not succeed in supplanting Arabic with European languages, but did succeed in giving prominence to local dialects over the classical language of the Qur'an. Despite the distance between the local dialects and the Qur'an, the classical language has remained the language of education, culture, and mass media. In most Arabic-speaking countries, however, some secularized politicians or writers have advocated converting the regional dialect into the official

language, thus relegating classical Arabic to ruin. In every case, this has failed, due in large part to a profound Arabic-Islamic identity.

Unable to entirely undermine Arabic in the Arab world, Western imperialists like the French, have attempted to subvert Islam by teaching “secular” Arabic, an artificial Arabic devoid of the omnipresent religious invocations it contains. Despite the fact that “language cannot meaningfully be studied in isolation from context and culture” (Emery 196), French teachers of Arabic argue that “Arabic must not be considered as a religious language” and should be used to encourage secularism and integration (Balta 123). Paul Balta presumes that if the state feigns support for the Islamic culture of the students, they would not feel the need to use religious symbols like the *hijab* to express their differences. Not only should Arabic be a means of Muslim control in France, Balta wishes to export it abroad. As he explains

Is it not in the interest of France to provide Arabic instructors to black African countries which are in need of them? Is it not better than letting them recruit instructors from abroad who are often mediocre and influenced by the fundamentalist ideology? The approach of the French School is also a means of forging spirits. (119)

In Linda Hamoud’s estimation, “there is a real problem once one speaks of religion in an Arabic language class” (67). As for Balta, he does not hide “the French Solution” to “the Muslim Problem.” When asked whether a secular Islam will be born in Western Europe, he explains that a new generation of secular Muslim intellectuals can serve as an example and “prepare the post-Islamist era” (330). This would permit Muslims to continue, if they wish, to practice their religion within the confines of secular republicanism while ensuring that nothing stops them from discontinuing to believe or to change their beliefs (330). In short, the French policy with regard to the Islamic presence in the Arabic language and culture is to deflect it in an attempt to create a psychological break between Arabic and Islam, an approach which may contribute to Arabic language attrition, a problem facing Arabic-speaking Muslims living outside of the Arabic-Islamic world.

The opinions expressed by the likes of Paul Balta and Linda Hamoud, both of whom are secular Arabs, are perfectly in line with France’s fundamentalist secular philosophy, in which there is no place for the Islamic religion in public schools, no place for Islam in the Arabic language and no place for the *hijab* on the heads of Muslim girls. It is clear that the secular French have little tolerance for diversity, are afraid of Islam, and wish to undermine it by all means, by prohibiting the Islamic headdress and by

attempting to purge the Arabic language of its integral religious expressions, the very Islamic heritage being passed on through Arabic instruction delivered in mosques which is seen as a threat to the teaching of secular Arabic. When faced with the “Muslim Problem,” the French strategy is one of mind control, double speak, cultural colonialism, and ideological imperialism.

The effects of Western cultural imperialism on the Arabic language are being observed throughout the Arab world. As Ferguson has pointed out with regards to Syria, the younger generation’s reduced use of Arabic politeness formulas, both in terms of formulas and complexity of patterns, may be attributed to urbanization and secularization, as well as European and American influence (1983: 68). The Arabic language is undergoing a radical reduction in the use of Islamic, Allah-centric, expressions, which are being supplanted by simplified forms based on English and French norms. As Ferguson has observed, “the profusion of thank yous, good wishes, and the like of Arabic society is being reduced to the models of French and English usage” (68). In many large Arabic cities, the greeting *salamu ‘alaykum*, the very symbol of Islam, is sometimes viewed with contempt and its speaker dismissed as an *arubi*, a backwards peasant, by “sophisticated” Westernized Arabs who employ “Allo,” “Bonjour,” “Hi,” and “Hello.” The situation is accentuated in the Western world where a decline in the use of religious expressions is observed among Arabic-speaking Muslims. While natural issues of language transfer and acquisition may account for the omission of Allah phrases, one must consider what that lack means in terms of religious bonds. In point of fact, the missing phrases and expletives from the Allah Lexicon mean that speakers are in limited contact with the Divine, a devastating blow when one considers that Allah and Islam are the basis of Arabic-Islamic identity. Arabic, of course, is not an exception in terms of the impact of Western popular culture. The same phenomenon is also taking place in Persian, where the use of English loan-words, rather than contributing clarity, simply causes confusion.

In non-Arabic-speaking countries, where the bond to the Qur’an was limited to similarities in script, and language differences made access to its significance more difficult, efforts to further distance Muslims from their scripture have been more successful. In Turkey, for example, Kemal Ataturk contributed to the destruction of the Ottoman Empire, abolished the Caliphate, closed theological schools, replaced Islamic law with a combination of European legal codes, outlawed Islamic headdress, imposed Western clothing, forced Turks to adopt Western surnames, and legalized alcohol. In

1928, he decreed that the Arabic script was to be replaced by a modified Latin alphabet, forcing all citizens six to 40 to attend school to learn the new alphabet. The Turkish language was “purified” by the removal of Arabic and Persian words and replaced by new Turkish ones. He even obliged the muezzins to make the call to prayer in Turkish as opposed to Arabic. By eliminating the Arabic-based alphabet, and replacing it by a Latin-based one, Mustafa Kemal effectively ensured that future generations of Turks would not be able to read the Qur’an in its original Arabic without the substantial effort required to learn the script. The result of his onslaught against all things Arabic and Islamic was the creation of a country with a divided identity, trapped between East and West, Europeanized by not European, alienated from the Islamic world, but still nominally Muslim.

In Iran, a proud country with a rich history, literature, and culture, Persian linguistic nationalism has played an important role. In the twentieth century, the leading activist in this area was Ahmad Kasravi who lived between 1888 and 1945. A prolific author, he attempted to promote a “Pure Persian,” replacing words of Arabic origin with others he invented (Mutahhari, Tabataba’i, Khumayni 192). He also wrote a series of polemical works, including *Sufigari* and *Shiagari*, in which he attacked both Sufism and Shi‘ism, accusing them of being sources of superstition and backwardness. Despite being a good writer, Kasravi became arrogant, went to the extreme of calling himself a prophet, and attempted to spread a pseudo-religion called Pak-Din, the Pure Religion. He was assassinated by Navvab Safavi, founder of Fidayan Islam, an organization which sought to establish an Islamic political constitution in Iran.

As a wanton worshipper of the West, the Shah of Iran waged a war against Islam, prohibiting the *hijab*, Friday prayers, and imposing Western dress, in the same sad scenario which keeps repeating itself throughout history. Inspired by Mustafa Kemal, and the efforts of Ahmad Kasravi, the Shah commenced a campaign to “purge” the Persian language from Arabic loan-words, and planned to replace the Persian alphabet, of Arabic origin, with a Latin one. The attempt to purify the Persian language of Arabic loan-words, and replace the Arabic-based Persian alphabet with the Latin one, was part of the Shah’s “white revolution.” His attack against the Arabic script was viewed by many as an attempt to alienate Iranians from Islam, and played a role in his overthrow in the Islamic Revolution of Iran.

In recent times, Ali (Siavash) Moslehi Moslehabadi, whose British name is David Albert Moseley, introduced the International Persian Alphabet (IPA), popularly

known as Pársik. He is described as “one of the most serious people among all the linguists and specialists who believe in the inappropriateness of the current Perso-Arabic writing system for Persian and whole the Iranian languages as Indo-European (Aryan languages)” [the mistakes in grammar and syntax are in the original] (<http://www.persiandirect.com/projects/ipa2/index.htm>). While his system, which is based on the English alphabet with all of its phonetic deficiencies, may be valuable in transliterating Persian, proposing it as a replacement for the Persian-Arabic script is clearly questionable on linguistic, cultural, and religious grounds.

The perils posed by adopting the Latin alphabet in place of the Persian alphabet of Arabic origin are multifaceted. Surprisingly, they seem to have escaped Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhari. When confronted with the proposal to change the Persian script to the Latin one, he claimed that Islam does not have one alphabet in particular and that “In the eyes of Islam, a universal religion, all alphabets are equal.” He did, however, express some concern as to the effect the change in script might have on Muslim society, and whether it would result in cultural alienation, considering that Persian scientific and Islamic literature has used an Arabic-based alphabet for 14 centuries. He also called for an investigation into who was behind the proposal and how it would be implemented, indicating that he may have harbored some suspicions regarding the matter.

What Ayatullah Mutahhari failed to fully seize, however, was that the importance of the Arabic script extends far beyond the mere representation of a given set of sounds by a particular set of letters. Whether it’s Morisco Spanish, Persian, Ottoman Turkish or Urdu, the “use of the Arabic alphabet brings with it a considerable degree of Arabization and Islamicization of the original languages” (López-Morillas 18). Since the success of the Islamic Revolution, the Iranian authorities seem to understand the importance of the Arabic/Persian script with regards to religious and cultural identity. In fact, in some of the ex-Soviet republics in Central Asia, a struggle is underway between Turkey, advocating the use of the Latin-based alphabet and Iran, advocating the use of the Arabic-Persian alphabet, as replacements for Russian Cyrillic. Both Turkey and Iran are vying for influence, seeking to draw these countries into their spheres of political and, in the case of Iran, religious influence.

Whether the Persian language will continue to employ its modified version of the Arabic alphabet or whether it will adopt a Latin-based one is a decision Persian-speakers will ultimately have to make for themselves. For any such venture to succeed, however, the support of the Islamic Republic of Iran would be required. In the case of French,

however, even the state-support of France has been insufficient to ensure the acceptance of even minor orthographic changes. At present, any change in the Persian script could only be conceivable in the aftermath of an American overthrow of the democratically-elected government, and the installation of a pro-Western puppet regime. In any event, Persian-speakers need to ponder long and hard about the linguistic, cultural, and religious consequences of any change of alphabet, and consider the intentions of those who wish to instigate it. If we have learned anything from Catholic Spain, Western colonialism, Kemalian Turkey, contemporary France, and Pahlavian Persia; if history has taught us anything with regards to the Arabic language and alphabet, it is that those who oppose their use tend to be pro-Western secularists who are openly hostile towards all things Islamic. If the Persian people want to become Americanized, secularized, and modernized, then *masha Allah* and *marhaba*. It would only demonstrate that the “occidentosis” of Jalal Al-I Ahmad and the “Westoxication” of ‘Ali Shariati has reached a critical stage.

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Chapter 9

The Omnipresence of Allah in the Arabic Language

1. Introduction

The religion of Islam, in accord with the Holy Qur'an and the *Sunnah* [Tradition] of Muhammad (d. 632), the Messenger of Allah, permits and even encourages mentioning the name of "God" to such an extent that the Arabic language has become saturated with a multitude of rich and varied idiomatic expressions invoking the name of Allah. These idioms are collectively known as "the Allah Lexicon," a feature unique to Arabic and a reflection of the Allah-centricity of the Arabic language, culture and civilization.⁹

In the following chapter, we will examine the importance of key words in the study of culture, the theological foundation of the Allah Lexicon and its main expressions, their frequency, the frequency of the word "God" in various languages, and some linguistic and socio-cultural limitations affecting the spread of the Allah Lexicon. On the basis of this study, it will be seen that key words are the key to comprehending culture, that both the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad are the inspiration for the Allah Lexicon, that Allah expressions number in the thousands and are suited for any conceivable context, that the name *Allah* or *God*, as a content word, has the highest functional yield in the Arabic language, that it is unique in this respect among all languages and cultures, even Muslim ones, and that Arabic is so replete with Allah expressions that we can speak seriously of the omnipresence of Allah in the Arabic language. On the basis of this study, it will be understood why Arabic is considered the language of Islam, the language of the Qur'an, and the language of Allah.¹⁰

⁹ Editor's Note: The expression "the Allah Lexicon" was coined by our colleague Barbara Castleton.

¹⁰ Editor's Note: Arabs and Muslims often refer to Arabic as literally "the language of Allah." This is often taken to mean that Allah's language is Arabic, a notion with no basis in reason or religion. In Surat Ibrahim [Abraham], Almighty Allah says "We sent not an apostle except [to teach] in the language of his own people, in order to make [things] clear to them" (14:14). In his commentary to this verse, Muhammad Hamidullah explains that:

Les commandements divins sont...révélés dans autant de langues que de prophètes cependant que Dieu est au-dessus du son et de la langue. On peut le comprendre peut-être par la métaphore que la révélation est comme le courant électrique incolore et invisible; venant de la génératrice, il prend la couleur et la force de la lampe qu'il illumine. Le prophète est comme la lampe, sa langue est la couleur de la lampe, et son rang est la force de la lampe. (255)

[Divine commandments are...revealed in as many languages as there were prophets despite the fact that God is above both sound and language. Perhaps this can be understood by means of metaphor: revelation is like an invisible and colorless electrical current. When it comes from the generator, it

2: Key Words: The Key to Culture

The value and importance of linking vocabulary and culture by means of key words has been widely recognized by scholars including, among others, Thorndike, Evans-Pritchard, Williams, Parkin, Moeran, Sapir and Wierzbicka. According to E.L. Thorndike, “[t]he vocabulary, active and passive, of any group is truly an index of its nature and culture as are its tools, monuments, customs and myths” (qtd. in Eaton vi). According to Edward Sapir: “language [is] a symbolic guide to culture” (1949: 162) and “vocabulary is a very sensitive index of the culture of a people” (27). As Anna Wierzbicka explains, “some words can be studied as focal points around which entire cultural domains are organized” (16). Clearly, key words reflect core cultural values and are crucial in the interpretation of culture.¹¹

Despite monolingual popular opinion and the academic arguments made by Noam Chomsky and Steven Pinker, different words do indeed reflect different ways of thinking, something which is usually self-evident to people with an intimate knowledge of two [or more] different languages and cultures (Hunt and Benaji 1988). Whether language determines thought or thought determines language is matter of philosophical

takes the color and the power of the lamp it enlightens. The prophet is like a lamp, his language is the color of the lamp, and his rank is the power of the lamp].

Hence, if the Arabic language deserves the title of “the language of Allah” it is because of its preponderance of Allah phrases. It must be noted, however, that Arabic existed prior to Islam and, as taught in non-Arabic and even Arabic-speaking venues, does not focus on the Allah Lexicon as a functional element in the language. Since the Allah Lexicon is a religious, cultural and structural component, fluency in the Arabic language cannot be attained without mastery of Allah expressions, for true linguistic literacy requires cultural literacy as well. As Mahmud Husein Salih and Hussein S. ‘Abdul-Fattah confirm, “It is axiomatic by now that developing one’s communicative competence in his native language or in a second language entails learning their respective routinized utterances, including of course the routinized oath expressions” (113). Clearly, the Allah Lexicon is an essential aspect of daily discourse and culture.

¹¹ Editor’s Note: Literature is also a means of understanding culture. As we explain in “Étude comparée de la *Chanson de Roland*, le *Poema de mio Cid* et le *Rawdah Khani*,”

La littérature est le reflet d’une société. Si nous examinons la littérature d’un peuple à un moment donné historique, cela nous permet de comprendre de nombreuses choses au sujet de la vie de cette époque, des conditions sociales et des idées prévalentes. La littérature nous permet de pénétrer dans la mentalité ou la psychologie d’une société ou d’une partie de celle-ci, nous permettant de comprendre la vision du monde de ses gens et leur comportement d’une façon beaucoup plus concrète et profonde que les livres d’histoire nous permettent. (32)

[Literature is the reflection of a society. If we examine the literature produced by a people at a given moment in history, it enables us to understand many things about the life of the period, social conditions and prevalent ideas. Literature allows us to penetrate into the mentality or psychology of a society, or part thereof, enabling us to understand its worldview in a much more profound and concrete way than history books permit.]

debate.¹² What is clear is that people express themselves differently because they see the world differently.¹³ The existence of culture-specific conceptual categories makes any absolutist theory on the universality of human thought untenable. Since language is the reflection of thought, and thought is the source of science, culture and creation, “linguistics is of strategic importance for the methodology of social sciences” (Sapir 166).¹⁴ Since language is the key to understanding culture, “word frequency lists from different languages provide useful baselines for comparisons of many sorts” (Thorndike qtd. in Eaton vi). Having established the theoretical foundations of this study, let us now explore on-target support for the religious triggers which lead to the myriad variations of the Allah Lexicon.

3. Theological Considerations

3.1 The Holy Qur'an

The Allah Lexicon originated during the emergence of Islam and first appears in the Holy Qur'an. In Surat al-Kahf [The Cave], Allah instructs Muslims to: “Nor say of anything, ‘I shall be sure to do so and so tomorrow’-- Without adding, ‘So please Allah!’ And call thy Lord to mind when thou forgettest, and say, ‘I hope that my Lord will guide me ever closer [even] than this to the right road’” (18: 23-24).

In Surat al-Baqarah [The Heifer], Almighty Allah says: “remember Me; I will remember you” (2:152). In Surat Bani Isra'il [The Children of Israel] and Surat Ta-Ha [Mystic Letters. T.H.], He says: “To Him belong the most beautiful names” (17:110; 20:8). In Surat al-A'raf [The Heights], He says “The most beautiful names belong to Allah (7:180) and in Surat al-'Imran [The Family of 'Imran], He calls upon the believers to: “Celebrate the praises of thy Lord again and again, and glorify Him in the evening and in the morning” (3:41). In Surat al-Ahzab [The Confederates], He commands the

¹² Editor's Note: Since this work falls under the general category of sociolinguistic research, rather than something more purist, our job is not to sort out the chicken and the egg. It is sufficient that the vastness of the Allah Lexicon, which arose through the distinctions drawn by Muhammad, should have altered the thought-patterns of Muslim Arabic speakers as a consequence. Readers can disagree with aspects of this and still find the topic valuable.

¹³ Editor's Note: Even simple concepts such as “bread” are viewed differently from culture to culture. The word “bread” does not conjure the same images in the mind of Europeans as it does among Americans, African or Asians. In Egyptian colloquial Arabic, the word for bread is *'ish* or “[source of] life,” conveying the vital importance of this staple food. For detailed examples of differences in language and worldview see “Languages” in Richard Hooker's *Cultures in America*.

¹⁴ Editor's Note: Cultural studies, which bring together in interdisciplinary equilibrium the various fields of anthropology, philosophy, cognitive psychology, religious studies, and sociology, among others, is inconceivable without linguistic considerations of the psycho-biology of language and its relationship to culture.

believers to “Celebrate the praises of Allah, and do this often; and glorify Him morning and evening (33:41-42).” And yet again in Surat al-Ra’d [The Thunder]: “Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction” (13:28).

3.2 The *Ahadith*¹⁵ / Prophetic Traditions

In a *hadith qudsi* [sacred tradition] we read: “Oh you who believe! Remember Allah abundantly” (Shirazi).¹⁶ In another, Almighty Allah repeats throughout “Remember Me...I will remember you.” In Tirmidhi (d. 892), the Messenger of Allah says: “The best remembrance [of Allah] is [saying] *la ilaha illa Allah* [There is no god but Allah].” In Muslim (d. 875), it is related that the Prophet said: “Whenever people sit and remember Allah, the angels surround them, mercy covers them and tranquility descends upon them and Allah makes mention of them to His Company [of angels].” In Muslim (d. 875) and Bukhari (d. 870), the Prophet states that: “He who remembers Allah, and he who does not, are like the living and the dead.” In Ahmad (d. 855), he says that the best deed is “[t]o leave the world while your tongue is busy with the remembrance of Allah.” In the same book, he says that the best people on the Day of Judgment will be “those who remember Allah greatly.” In Bayhaqi (d. 1066), Allah’s Messenger says: “For everything there is a polish, and the polish for hearts is the remembrance of Allah.” In Ahmad (d. 855), Abu Dawud (d. 817) and Tirmidhi (d. 892), the Prophet says: “Gabriel came to me and told me to order my Companions to raise their voices in *takbir*.”¹⁷ Not only did the Messenger of Allah encourage the remembrance of Allah, he prescribed many formulas, expressions and invocations for purposes of personal piety and for particular occasions, of which many examples are to be found in the collections of prophetic traditions.¹⁸

¹⁵ Editor’s Note: *Ahadith* is the plural of *hadith* and refers to the sayings of Prophet Muhammad and, for the Shi’ites, the Twelve Imams from his Household.

¹⁶ Editor’s Note: A *hadith qudsi* or sacred *hadith* is a tradition in which the Prophet Muhammad quotes Almighty Allah. The *ahadith qudsiyyah* include revelations not included in the text of the Qur’an. One of the best collections of sacred *ahadith* from Shi’ite sources is *Kalimat Allah* compiled by Shirazi. Unfortunately, no idiomatic English translation of this text is available. The most complete collection of sacred *hadith* from Sunni sources is *al-Ahadith al-qudsiyyah* compiled by the Committee of the Qur’an and Hadith of the Higher Council for Islamic Affairs in Egypt. It consists of all the sacred *hadith* found in the six canonical collections and in Malik’s (d. 795) *al-Muwatta’*, containing four hundred sacred *ahadith* with variants where they occur. For an informed introduction to the sacred *ahadith*, refer to Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies’ *Forty Hadith Qudsi*.

¹⁷ Editor’s Note: *Takbir* is the act of saying *Allahu Akbar* or “Allah is the Greatest.”

¹⁸ Editor’s Note: An example would be the famous *tasbeih* the Prophet prescribed for his daughter, Fatimah al-Zahra’ (d. 631-32), which consists of reciting *Allahu Akbar* 34 times, *alhamdulillah* 33 times and *subhana Allah* 33 times. The *hadith* is found in both Sunni and Shi’ite canonical texts, including Majlisi’s (d. 1627-28) *Bihar al-anwar*. See chapter 40 of Ordoni’s *Fatimah the Gracious*.

3.3 The ‘*Ulama*’ / Scholars of Islam

In light of the teachings of the Holy Qur’an and the *Sunnah*, it comes as no surprise that the scholars of traditional Islam¹⁹ universally agree that *dhikr*, the remembrance of Allah, is permissible at all times and places, quietly or out loud, individually or in group, with or without ritual ablutions, in various forms, including *tasbih*, *tahmid*, *takbir*, and praising and praying for the Prophet.²⁰

4. The Allah Lexicon

The Allah Lexicon is a language feature specific to the Arabic language.²¹ It is utilized extensively in the operation of everyday discourse in Arabic and to a much lesser degree among non-Arabic-speaking Muslims. It includes the following common expressions used by Muslims worldwide in a variety of different contexts:

Bismillah: In the name of Allah; *insha’ Allah*: If Allah wills; *subhana Allah*: Glory be to Allah; *ya Allah*: O Allah; *masha’ Allah*: It is the will of Allah; *jazaka Allahu khayran*: Allah will reward you well; *la ilaha illa Allah*: There is no god but Allah; *bismillah wa billah*: I swear by Allah; *alhamdulillah*: Praise be to Allah; *yarhamuka Allah*: May Allah have mercy on you; *astaghfirullah*: I ask forgiveness from Allah; *fi sabilillah*: In the path of Allah; *tabarak Allah*: Praise and might belongs to Allah; *a’udhu billah*: I seek refuge in Allah; *inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji’un*: From Allah we come and to Him we return; *fi amanillah*: Go with the protection of Allah; *lihubbillah*: For the love of Allah; *tawakkaltu ‘ala Allah*: I put my trust in Allah; *la hawla wa la quwwata illa billah*: There is no might nor power but by [the help] of Allah; *baraka Allahu fik*: May Allah bless you; *radiyya Allahu ‘anhum*: May Allah be pleased with them.

The Allah Lexicon goes well beyond these examples and encompasses thousands of invocations, each of which is contextually bound: historically, geographically, ethnically, socio-emotionally, spiritually, and situationally. The most complete collection of Allah expressions in the English language is to be found in *The Muslim Conception of*

¹⁹ Editor’s Note: By “traditional Islam,” we refer to the true Islamic intellectual and hermeneutic traditions of the mainstream Sunni, Shi’ah and Sufi, as opposed to the reductionist, revisionist, literalist, essentialist and innovative interpretations of Islam made by the *wahhabiyyah* and *salafiyyah* who, in an effort to “return to the roots of Islam” and “follow the letter of the law,” as opposed to its spirit, wish to disregard and even wipe out over fourteen centuries of sound scholarship. For further details on Wahhabism, refer to *Wahhabism: A Critical Essay*, by Hamid Algar and Luis Alberto Vittor’s insightful remarks in “El Islam shi’ita: ¿ortodoxia o heterodoxia?” on pages 19-22, soon to be available in our critically annotated translation under the title of *Shi’ite Islam: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy?*

²⁰ Editor’s Note: *Tasbih*, literally, the recitation of *subhana Allah* [Glory be to Allah] is used in the general sense of praising God, while *tahmid* means the saying of *alhamdulillah* [Praise be to Allah].

²¹ Editor’s Note: As such, the Allah Lexicon is used to varying degrees by all Arabic speakers, regardless of their religion, showing the pervasive effect of the dominant culture.

God and Human Welfare by Moshe Piamenta, consisting of over 200 pages of duly contextualized Allah expressions drawn from both classical Arabic and everyday colloquial speech from throughout the Arabic world. Piamenta has divided the Allah Lexicon into two main sections, “The Veneration of God” and “God and Human Welfare.” The first section covers expressions venerating God by affirming His existence, omnipotence, and unity; as well as thanking, glorifying, and blessing God. It also includes the invocations of God, religious symbols, Islam, the Prophet, the Qur’an, the *hajj* and the Ka’bah, and God’s most beautiful names, namely the ninety-nine most common names Almighty Allah uses to describe Himself in the Holy Qur’an. The second section covers invocations relating to humankind’s survival and God’s blessings and support.

On the basis of his painstaking and elaborate research, and drawing from a voluminous corpus of formulae consisting of evocations expressed in a variety of Arabic dialects from a representative and diverse group of informants, Piamenta concludes:

Man’s veneration of God emerges from the belief in God’s existence, in God’s omnipresence and omnipotence; that the believer’s veneration of God in non-ritual prayers and invocations consists in bearing witness that there is no deity but God and that Muhammad is the Prophet of God, in declaring His unity, in worshipping Him, in praising and thanking Him, in glorifying and blessing Him; that the believer is keen on his religion, on his Prophet, and on the Qur’an; that he recites the Fatihah on various occasions; that the pilgrimage to Makkah and to the Ka’bah in particular are regarded by him with reverence; that formulae expressing man’s veneration of God may include names attributed to God known as God’s most beautiful names...not exhausting the full list of the Qur’anic names, while comprising some that do not occur in the Qur’an *ad litteram*. (2)

As Barbara Castleton points out in her dissertation, the Allah Lexicon is present not only in speech throughout the Arabic-speaking world but in the tangible features of life as well: on flags, government stationary, songs, literature, emails (2000a). It abounds in Arabic and Islamic music worldwide²² and forms an

²² Editor’s Note: Despite being antithetical to Islamic values, popular Arabic music makes common use of secularized Allah expressions. Islamic music, regardless of its language of expression, invokes Almighty Allah in perpetual praise. In North America, rapper Malik Shahid employs the Shi’ite war-cry *Allahu Akbar, Ya Husayn* as a chorus in his song “The War of the One” while singer Safiyyah combines English and Arabic Allah phrases in her *Flowers of Faith: Islamic Songs for Children*. In the U.K., Yusuf Islam, formerly known as Cat Stevens, has produced numerous Islamic songs utilizing the Allah Lexicon in English and Arabic. In Malaysia, the Muslim music group Raihan reached international stardom with their Islamic songs interlacing Allah expressions in Arabic and Malaysian. In Pakistan, Nusrat Fateh ‘Ali Khan,

integral part of traditional Muslim medicine.²³ It is also present in politics from the huge inscriptions on the outside of Moroccan towns proclaiming “Allah, King and Country” to Saddam Husayn’s insertion of *Allahu Akbar* on the Iraqi flag in an attempt to attract some Islamic sentiment, to military and political parties such as the *Hizbullah*, “The Party of Allah,” and to the election of George W. Bush.²⁴

5. The Frequency of the Allah Lexicon

Any observer who has lived in the Arab world even for short periods of time inevitably notices the preponderance of expressions invoking the name of Allah explicitly or implicitly in everyday Arabic speech.²⁵ The Allah Lexicon occurs most frequently among Arabic-speaking Muslims, be they Mauritanian, Moroccan, Algerian, Libyan, Tunisian, Egyptian, Sudanese, Palestinian, Jordanian, Lebanese, Chadian, Syrian, Iraqi, Kuwaiti, Emirati, Qatari, Bahraini, Eritrean, Comoran, Djiboutian, Ethiopian, Omani, Somali, Saudi Arabian or Yemeni. Classical Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic and the Eastern, Western and Gulf Arabic dialects are saturated with multifarious manifestations and variations of the Allah Lexicon.²⁶ As Castleton remarks, “[s]ome Arabic-speaking cultures

and other Qawwali musicians, spread the Allah Lexicon in a combination of Arabic and Urdu. In the U.K., Sami Yusuf has harmoniously combined the Arabic-English Allah Lexicon in his CDs: *al-Mu'allim* and *My Ummah*. In Morocco and other Arabic nations, Allah expressions are the cohesive element in the ever popular *nashid* and *amdah*, Islamic songs, praises, and odes. *Allah* is further used freely in Arabic love songs, music videos and by the most liberal of society’s artists, and without any religious or transcendent intent—it is merely part of the lingo in such cases.

²³ Editor’s Note: In Arabic, traditional Islamic medicine is known as *Yunani* or Greek Medicine. It consists of a combination of Prophetic, Galenic and Arab medicine. In countries like India, Islamic medicine is a combination of *al-tibb al-nabawi*, or prophetic medicine, and Ayurvedic medicine. In any of its forms, Muslim medicine seeks to heal both spirit and body. The spiritual needs are addressed through verses from the Holy Qur’an, by seeking protection with the names of Allah, the Exalted, seeking intercession and prayer. The physical needs are addressed through herbal medicine. For hundreds of examples of the Allah Lexicon used for medicinal purposes, refer to *Islamic Medical Wisdom: The Tibb al-’A’imma*, translated by Batool Ispahany and edited by Andrew J. Newman, as well as *al-Tibb al-nabawi*, by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 1350).

²⁴ Editor’s Note: According to one study, “72 percent of Muslims voted for Bush, 19 for Ralph Nader...and merely 8 percent for Gore” (Reichley 345). While President Bush’s use [or abuse] of the word *God* was meant to appeal to the religious right, he seemed to have reaped an unforeseen benefit, the Islamic vote, with Muslims voting for him in masses, perhaps inspired, consciously or subconsciously, by his repeated references to God. However, as a result of Bush’s foreign policy, Muslims as an American minority have categorically reviewed this habit. For more on religion in American civil life, see *With “God on our Side?” How American “Civil Religion” Permeates Society and Manifests itself in Public Life* by Bruce Murry, available online at: http://www.facsnet.org/issues/faith/civil_religion1.htm#god.

²⁵ Editor’s Note: Davies concurs that “the English-speaking learner of Arabic is likely to be struck, sooner or later, by the proliferation of religious references in formulas” (81). Such extensive use of religious expressions in daily discourse and interaction demonstrates the dominance of Islamic ideology in the life of Muslim communities (‘Abd el-Jawad 2000: 219).

²⁶ Editor's Note: Further research on frequency and distribution, both regional and social, of Allah across the Arabic-speaking world is much needed and would be a valuable contribution to scholarship. As Schmidt observes, "almost everything that sociolinguistics can discover about the sociolinguistic patterning of Arabic will have some relevance for the teaching and learning of Arabic as a second language" (55). When it comes to the Allah Lexicon, in many areas impressions, as opposed to data, dominate. It is clearly established that Allah expressions permeate both classical and colloquial Arabic. However, is there any particular dialect where they are used more prolifically than others? The issue of regional differences in the frequency of the Allah Lexicon needs to be researched, as does its relation to education and social class and the particular contexts in which they are used.

Research has so far focused primarily on positive Allah expressions as opposed to negative Allah expressions such as *Allah y'atik humma* [May Allah give you fever!] and *Allah yal'anak* [May Allah curse you!]. As 'Abd el-Jawad observes, "despite its linguistic and sociocultural richness, high functional load, and high frequency," conversational oaths "in an Arabic context has been unduly neglected to the extent that it has rarely been studied as a linguistic phenomenon" (2000: 220). 'Abd el-Jawad's study on "Swearing in Arabic" provides a good overview, demonstrating that swearing "is not just a routine formula with low functionality; it is a cultural index with a wide range of communicative functions" (2000: 239). Sadok Masliyah's article "Curses and Insults in Iraqi Arabic" has also provided a large list of negative Allah expressions; however, more work needs to be done on similar expressions in other Arabic dialects.

Studies also need to be conducted to determine whether there are any gender differences when it comes to the use of the Allah Lexicon. Several studies have demonstrated that unlike women in the rest of the world, Arabic-speaking females tend to approximate standard Arabic to a lesser degree than Arabic-speaking males: "male speakers consistently use the standard linguistic forms more than women" ('Abd el-Jawad 1981: 324); "women use the standard prestigious forms in both careful and casual styles less often than men" (1983: 103); "male informants use more prestigious forms than females" (Kojak 1983: 4); Cairene speakers "did not fit the Western sociolinguistic model [because of] the absence of any apparent greater sensitivity on the part of women to the prestige of the classical / standard norm" (Schmidt). Ibrahim's study, "Standard and Prestige Language: A Problem in Arabic Sociolinguistics," which insists that "All available data indicates that Arab women in speaking Arabic employ the locally prestigious features...more than men" (124) does not debunk the aforementioned studies and merely demonstrates a difference of opinion as to what constitutes prestigious Arabic. For 'Abd el-Jawad, Schmidt and Kojak, it is classical Arabic; for Ibrahim, it is colloquial Arabic as spoken by the urban elite. As to the direction women's speech takes in the Arabic world, the jury is still out. Abu Haidar, for example, challenged Ibrahim's findings. In her study of a speech group of Baghdadi men and women, Abu Haidar showed that in Baghdad the prestige variety of spoken Arabic was in the direction of literary or classical Arabic and that women, more than men, tended to favor this variety, generally eschewing stigmatized forms of the urban vernacular (Emery 198). As female Arabic speakers tend to use less classical Arabic than their male counterparts, it might be assumed that their Allah expressions are drawn more from *'ammiyyah* [the vernacular] than from *fusha* [the formal literary language].

It would also be interesting to note if female Arabic speakers prefer some expressions over others; for example, formulas of compassion and mercy as opposed to formulas of wrath and divine retribution. Accordingly, 'Abd el-Jawad observes that

women, especially older ones, tend not only to swear by worldly objects, such as the dear members of the family or other natural, social and cultural phenomena, more often than men do, but they also tend to use more elaborate linguistic formulas in swearing, e.g., the rhymed oaths, than men do. Their oaths seem to be more complimentary, human, and family-oriented. (2000: 228)

'Abd el-Jawad also notes that "older uneducated women...rarely swear by God" (2000: 227). According to Stewart, "[c]ognate curses are often used by parents or superiors towards children and subordinates. These cognate curses are used by women more than men and typically by women of lower socio-economic status in traditional society" (344). Cognate curses, it should be noted, rarely invoke God. So, Arabic women do indeed curse; however, the curses they employ rarely invoke the Deity.

Emery has touched upon some of these gender differences in Omani Arabic, noting that older people, especially women, often use *ta'aqqabna 'alaykum al-'afiyah* [May good health follow you], *darbak khadra* [may your path be green] and *qiddaish al-Rahman* [Allah, the Compassionate, is before you] while men appear to favor *hayyak Allah* [May Allah give you life] and young women tend to employ the pan-Arabic *ma'a al-salamah* as a closing exchange more than men (208). Congratulations at weddings appear to have gender differences, with religiously minded men given to using some variation of the phrase *din wa*

may favor the use of one [expression] over another in a particular venue, but all cultures employ the Lexicon throughout normal discourse” (2000a). Without a doubt, the noun *Allah* has the highest functional yield in the Arabic language.

While the Allah Lexicon is found throughout the Muslim *ummah* [world community, lit. “motherland”], its frequency varies from country to country, from culture to culture and from language to language. The Allah Lexicon appears among Persians, Turks, Indians, and other peoples who have been Muslim for over a millennium. Although Allah expressions occur in Persian, Turkish and Urdu, they are far less prevalent than they are among the Arabs and are often supplanted by expressions falling partially outside the realm of the Arabic Allah Lexicon, such as *Khuda Hafiz* [God is the Preserver], and the secular Urdu greeting *adab*, meaning roughly “regards to you.” Arabic speakers use thousands upon thousands of Allah expressions. Non-Arabic speakers rarely use more than one or two dozens.²⁷

Allah expressions occur with least frequency among Muslim converts/reverts from the West. The Allah Lexicon among Western Muslims rarely goes beyond the most common expressions such as *bismillah* [In the name of Allah], *alhamdulillah* [Praise be to Allah], *Allahu Akbar* [Allah is the Greatest], *subhana Allah* [Glory be to Allah],

dunya [may your marriage be successful spiritually and materially] while younger men and women use the expression *mink al-mal wa minha al-'ayyal* [money from you and children from her] (210). When congratulating women on the birth of a baby, women tend to use sympathetic formulas and invocations such as *ahwan insha' Allah* [less pain, Allah willing] and *khatirah wa salamah insha' Allah* [danger, then safety, Allah willing] while it is considered socially inappropriate for a man to congratulate the mother unless she is directly related to him (210). Invocations to ward off the evil eye such as *al-salatu wa al-salam 'ala Muhammad*, among others, pertain to the feminine domain. In the Dhahira region mainly older women use the expression *mu intu wa rahma* with the root-echo response *Allah yirham walidik* [May Allah have mercy on your parents] whereas men tend to say *ni'imu bi al-rahmah* [blessings of rain]. The traditional Qur'anic words of condolence *inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un* [to Allah we belong and to Him is our return] is used mainly by men who also refer to the inevitability of fate in the expression *hadha ma qaddara Allah* [this was decreed by Allah]. In Morocco, expressions such as *msakum* [your afternoon] and *qata'at min fummak bi al-'asal* [I cut it from your mouth with honey] are used only by women (Davies 84). Evidently, more work needs to be done and any future research should be conducted by female scholars since, in Arabic-Islamic culture, “[m]ale/female exchanges where participants are not related...tend to be very brief” (Emery 202) and women are generally inhibited around men. In light of these distinctions, there may be many linguistic forms which are only adequate for women and others only suitable for men.

We do know that some Allah expressions are only appropriate for children, such as “May Allah keep you” and that children have a different repertoire. We know that some Allah phrases are meant for Muslims, such as “May Allah forgive...” and others are meant for non-Muslims, like “May Allah have mercy upon,” as the Qur'an prohibits asking forgiveness for non-Muslims. As Almighty Allah explains, “It is not fitting, for the Prophet and those who believe, that they should pray for forgiveness for Pagans, even though they be of kin, after it is clear to them that they are companions of the Fire” (9:113). Although Abraham did pray for his polytheistic step-father, saying “Forgive my father, for that he is among the astray” (26:86), he did so “only because of a promise he had made to him” (9:114).

²⁷ Editor's Note: Ironically, Christian and Jewish Arabs call upon Allah more frequently than non-Arabic-speaking Muslims do.

a'udhu billah [I take refuge in Allah], *masha' Allah* [It is the will of Allah], *fi amanillah* [Go with Allah], *astaghfirullah* [I ask forgiveness from Allah], *jazaka Allahu khayran* [Allah will reward you well], and the occasional *inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un* [From Allah we come and to Him we return]. These Arabic idioms, of course, undergo varying degrees of phonetic and contextual corruption when entering other languages.²⁸

6. The Frequency of *Allah* in the Arabic Language

The third most commonly occurring word in the Holy Qur'an is *Allah*, occurring 2,702 times, not including the *basmalah* (Abu al-Futuh 133).²⁹ If we include the 113 cases of "In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful," then we have a total of 2,815 occurrences of the name *Allah* in the holy book. If we discount particles, it is the most common word repeated in the sacred scripture. As Martin Lings observes in "The Reality of Sufism:" "[t]he name *Allah* occurs so often that it may be considered as the warp on which the Qur'anic text is woven" (517). After *Allah*, the word *rabb* [Lord] is the 12th most common, occurring 970 times, while the word *ilah* [god] is the 91st most common word, occurring 113 times.

According to David Quitregard's sample of two million words drawn from all types of publications, such as fiction, drama, essays, historical, geographical and scientific works, magazines from nine countries, newspapers from fourteen countries, films from seven countries, radio programs from twelve countries, television programs from eight countries, children's books, and literary histories, the word *Allah* is the 18th most commonly occurring word in the Arabic language, preceded only by the fourth person singular of the verb "to be," *kana* [was], as well as series of articles, prepositions, conjunctions and subject pronouns such as *al-* [the], *min* [from], *wa* [and], *'an* [to], *fa* [so], *fi* [in], *la* [no], *huwwa / hiyya* [he / she], *aw* [or], *ila* [to], *li alla* [lest], *bi* [with / in], *ana* [I], *hadha / hadhihi* [this], *dhalika* and *tilka* [that]. (Quitregard Unit 1). If we drop the articles, prepositions, conjunctions, and subject pronouns, *Allah* is the most commonly occurring *kalimah* [word] and *ism* [name/noun].³⁰ In Islam, God is one and appropriately

²⁸ Editor's Note: As Castleton has shown, the Allah Lexicon does not transfer pragmatically and lexically into the English language when Arabic speakers switch to that language (2000b 5:3). For non-Arabic speakers, the implementation of Allah expressions poses particular problems. Without understanding the contexts which call for the Allah Lexicon, many English speaking Muslim converts use them erroneously and inappropriately. While a process of adaptation may be at play, if these individuals study the Arabic language and attempt to employ Allah expression in Arabic in the same way they have done in English, they can make themselves the object of ridicule.

²⁹ Editor's Note: The *basmalah* or *tasmiyyah* is the introductory "In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful" that precedes 113 of the 114 chapters of the Qur'an.

appears as the first in the list of most common Arabic words. The 19th most common word, or the second after Allah, is *wahid* [one] (Unit 1). The 88th most common word is *muslim*; the 97th is *Islam* (Unit 5); the 120th is *salam* [peace] (Unit 6); the 143rd is *Qur'an* and the 310th is *rasul* [messenger]. When we examine the most common words in Arabic we observe a prevalence of religious, spiritually centered, vocabulary.

In Ernest N. McCarus and Raji M. Rammuny's "Word Count of Elementary Modern Literary Arabic Textbooks," the name *Allah* is found in every one of the 11 textbooks which were scanned (146). The fact that the word appears in every textbook demonstrates that this lexical item is one of the most necessary for beginning students. The shortfall of this study, however, is that it only lists the number of texts the word appears in and not how many times it occurs, limiting itself to listing the frequency results found in Jacob Landau's *A Word Count of Modern Arabic Prose*.

In Landau's study of 273,178 words from the language of the Arabic daily press, conducted in 1959, the word *Allah* appeared 296 times, making it the 76th most common word (335). Although a degree of divergence is to be expected between spoken and written language, such a significant reduction of occurrences may demonstrate, if anything, a tendency among the educated secular elite of the Arab world to suppress the natural occurrence of the name Allah in the official Arabic media.³¹ The situation seems to have improved, though, as can be seen from a study conducted in February 1999 by Tim Buckwalter in which the word *Allah* is ranked as the 30th most common word in online Arabic newspaper archives including *al-Ahram* [Cairo], *al-Bayan* [UAE], *al-Dustur* [Amman], *al-Hayat* [London], *al-Nahar* [Beirut], *al-Rayah* [Qatar], *al-Riyyad* [Riyadh], *al-Safir* [Beirut], *al-Sharq al-Awsat* [London] and *al-Watan* [Qatar].

7. The Frequency of the Word God in Various Languages

7.1 Hebrew

³⁰ Editor's Note: "The Arabic term *ism* shares with the Latin term *nomen* the grammatical meaning of 'noun' as well as the semantic meaning of 'name,' with the further ambiguity that 'noun' can also mean 'verbal noun' or 'adjective'" (Burrell and Daher 195, note 20).

³¹ Editor's Note: On the one hand, there may be a secularizing tendency which aims at purging the written language of the press of the most common word in the Arabic language: the name of Almighty Allah. On the other hand, there may be a culturally specific pattern at play which places elements of the Allah Lexicon in very personal, intercommunicative venues, rather than second and third level media, an idea which is interesting but which requires further research to support it. The paradox here is not so much that the Allah Lexicon phrases are missing from the press as the disparity between the language of the press and the language of the people. Hundreds of languages have died out due to edict, colonization and cultural imperialism. For the Allah Lexicon to survive, and for religious and cultural values to survive, be preserved and prevail, it is not sufficient to remember Allah and to mention His name merely in one's mind. If Muslims were to start saying *bismillah* [In the name of Allah], *alhamdulillah* [Praise be to Allah], *ash-shukrullillah* [Thanks be to Allah], and so forth, in their heads, the name of Allah would soon completely drop out of the spoken language. The Qur'an dictates that the name of Allah needs to be openly expressed, not suppressed. Allah expressions repeatedly reinforce an Islamic worldview, beliefs, ethics and morals.

In the Hebrew of the Old Testament, the situation is similar to that of the Holy Qur'an and the Arabic language, with the name *Elohim* [god, plural] being the second most common word (Mitchel 1). According to Larry Mitchel's list, *Elohim* is only preceded by the preposition *el* or towards (Mitchel 1). This is incorrect as *min* [from] and *et* [with or marker for the direct object] are more numerous than *Elohim*, as well as a number of prepositions that are inseparable from the word to which they are attached. Based on Mitchel's data, and if we discard grammatical items, *Elohim* would be the most common lexical item out of the 10,000 different words appearing in the Old Testament. The problem, however, is that Mitchel does not seem to have considered the name *Yahweh* in his *Student's Vocabulary for Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic*. Indeed, a search of the Hebrew Old Testament, courtesy of the Blue Letter Bible, using the numbers from Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance*, indicate that the Tetragrammaton יהוה *Yahweh* occurs 6,519 times; אלהים *Elohim* 2,606 times; אדוני *Adon* [Lord], 335 times; and אל *El* [God], 245 times. Michael Carasik's computer concordance, however, found 6,828 cases of the Tetragrammaton, 2,602 cases of *Elohim*, 335 instances of *Adon*, and 237 occurrences of *El*. According to the editors of the *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, the Tetragrammaton occurs 6,518 times in the Masoretic text. While these words counts all differ slightly, they clearly indicate that *Yahweh* is the most common noun in the Hebrew of the Old Testament. If we base ourselves on the frequency list on the back of *Biblical Hebrew* by Kittel, Hoffer, and Wright, discarding the words *min* and *et* and some of the other eight particles, the Tetragrammaton is the most common word in the Bible and *Elohim* is the twelfth. This comes as no surprise since we are dealing with a religious text in the language of the Prophets of Israel.

In a small journalistic corpus of 2,251,976 words prepared by Shmuel Bolosky--including texts from *Haaretz*, *Maariv* and *Yedioth Aharonot*, as well as some literary texts--the frequency for the word "God" in the Hebrew of the Israeli media is as follows:

Table 1: Frequency of "God" in the Modern Hebrew Media

אלוהים	Elohim	156
השם	hashshem	51
יהוה	Yahweh	30
אל	El	4
אלוה	Eloah	3
אדוני	Adonay	2
אלוהי	Elohay	1

The frequency of the word *Elohim* is almost 71 times per million and *Yahweh* is 14 times per million. For the name *Yahweh*, 24 of the 30 occurrences formed part of the collocation “Yahweh Witness” or “Jehovah Witness.” According to Alexandra McCauley’s *Hebrew Word Frequency Database*, a 30 million word corpus of Modern Hebrew drawn from the Israeli newspaper *Ha’aretz*, the word אֱלֹהִים / *Elohim*, has a frequency of 1.2 occurrences per million. The personal name of God in Hebrew continues to be exceedingly rare due to the traditional taboo on mentioning the name of the Almighty.³² As a result, the name יְהוָה / *Yahweh* has a mere frequency of 0.5 occurrences per million.

7.2 English

One of the largest systematic word counts ever conducted in the English language studied 17 million words from 6,333 fiction and non-fiction texts used in schools and colleges in the United States in order to provide a meaningful description of the characteristics of the vocabulary students are apt to encounter throughout their schooling. The study found that the word *God* was the 97th most common word, occurring 97 times per million words (Zeno 129). In a study of spoken American English, the word *God* appeared 141 times out of 1,058,888 words drawn from 30 different speakers (Hartvig). In a study of 1 million words, W. Nelson Francis and Henry Kučera found that the word *God* was the 292nd most common word in English (468). In a study based on a million word corpus of present day English prose, it was found that the word *God* appeared 192 times (Johanson 170).

7.3 Spanish

³² Editor’s Note: Rabbinic Judaism prohibits mentioning the name of Yahweh. In order to refer to God, religious Jews recur to the names *Adonai* and *Elohim*, “Lord” and “God,” and even these are used sparingly so as not to “use the name of God in vain.” In fact, as Shmuel Bolosky explains, there is a tendency to say *ha-Shem* [the name], *adoshem*, or *Adonai*; in Israel one says *Amonai* while some Jews would say *Elokim* rather than *Elohim*. In Rabbinic literature, in their voice rather than quoting the Bible, the main Hebrew name for God appears to be *ha-kadosh baruch hu*, “the Holy One (blessed be He).” Although it is often abbreviated, Michael Carasik found 953 of these in the Babylonian Talmud alone. According to Rabbi Chaim Golberger from Keneseth Israel Congregation in Minneapolis, “Speaking the name of God in vain is a serious offense in Judaism, in that it invokes significant spiritual repercussions, but it is not a capital offense in that the Jewish court system can assess an earthly penalty.” According to Michael Carasik, the real-world effect of the holiness of the Tetragrammaton results in treating any document that contains it in written form (like this book, for example) as something that is holy cannot be destroyed. Hence, it is used most sparingly--generally only in copies of the Bible.” As Rabbi Goldberger elaborates, “Where the Tetragrammaton is spelled out in print in Hebrew letters we do not permit destruction of the paper. Rather, we collect it for burial, in the same way we bury a Torah scroll no longer fit to be used.”

In Spanish, *Dios* [God] is the 107th most common word, appearing 11,940 times out of a corpus of 7 million words (Rodríguez 17). Clearly one of the most impressive corpora available is Mark Davies' 100 million word corpus of Spanish from the 1200s to the 1900s. This massive corpus includes 20 million words from the 1200s to the 1400s, 40 million words from the 1500s to the 1700s, and 40 million words from the 1800s to the 1900s. The 20 million words from the 1900s are divided equally among literary texts, oral texts, as well as newspapers and encyclopedias. The 80 million words covering the 1200s to the 1800s are drawn mostly from historical and literary sources. A search of the word *Dios* in the corpus revealed the following:

Table 2: Frequency of *Dios* in Spanish

1200	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800	Total	Literature	Oral	Text
18,993	7,656	14,671	44,837	27,120	7,468	20,408	5,525	2,605	1,657	1,263

A search for the expression *ojalá* [God willing / hopefully: a phonetic adaptation of the Arabic *insha' Allah*] revealed the following:

Table 3: Frequency of *ojalá* in Spanish

1200	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800	Total	Literature	Oral	Text
0	0	0	154	241	226	421	601	179	343	79

While a search for the name *Alá* [Allah] revealed:

Table 4: Frequency of *Alá* in Spanish

1200	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800	Total	Literature	Oral	Text
6	0	3	64	184	15	33	95	18	53	24

7.4 Portuguese

The Portuguese word for God, *Deus*, appears 24 times in the COMPARA corpus of 685,952 words drawn from 23 source texts from 1980s and 1990s (Frankenberg-García). This may be due to the fact that the Portuguese “are not especially great swearers” and that, “[i]n general, the Portuguese do not have the same variety or imagination in swear words that their tropical cousins [the Brazilians] demonstrate” (Vogensen).

7.5 French

In French, *Dieu* [God] is the 263rd most common word (Escande Unit 14). In a study of the French spoken in Québec, Canada, it was found that the word *Dieu* [God] appeared 342 times out of 125,000 words (Vikis-Freibergs).

7.6 Italian

According to Alphonse Juilland's *Frequency Dictionary of Italian Words*, the

word *Dio* [God] has a total of 27 occurrences, a coefficient of usage of 16.21, a coefficient of frequency of 27, and a coefficient of distribution of 60.02 (110), in a lexical universe of 500,000 words taken from five equal sub-samples of 100,000 words from a multitude of dramatic, fictional, essayistic, periodical, and technical literature (xii). The word *Dio* is the 1,610th most common word in written Italian (441). As for spoken Italian, the word *Dio* occurs 146 times out of 489,616 words drawn from the spoken Italian of various social sectors and regions, including Firenze, Milano, Napoli and Roma (Mauro).

7.7 Rumanian

According to Alphonse Juilland's *Frequency Dictionary of Rumanian Words*, the word *Zeus* [God] has a total of 105 occurrences, a coefficient of usage of 51.87, a coefficient of frequency of 105, and a coefficient of distribution of 49.40 (398) in a lexical universe of 500,000 words taken from five equal sub samples of 100,000 words from a multitude of dramatic, fictional, essayistic, periodical, and technical literature (xv). The expression *dumnezeu* or "My God!" has a total of 299 occurrences, a coefficient of distribution of 228.16, a coefficient of frequency of 299, and a coefficient of distribution of 76.31 (111). The word *Zeus* [God] is the 495th most common word in Rumanian (414) and the expression *dumnezeu* ["My God!"] is the 163rd most common (406).

7.8 German

Although the German word for God, *Gott*, is listed among the first thousand concepts in Helen S. Eaton's *Word Frequency Dictionary* (1.11), subsequent studies have not been able to confirm this claim. In Hyde Flipo's "Word Frequency Worthäufigkeit: The Top 1,000 Words in German," based on Projekt Wortschatz from the Universität Leipzig, the word *Gott* does not appear even once. In Amit Dubey's "Frequency Dictionary of German" the word *Gott* appears only 8 times out of 355,096 tokens from the Negr@ Corpus drawn from German newspapers.

7.9 Latin

In the Perseus Digital Library, the word *Deus* [God] appears 8,976 times out of 2,813,462 Latin words drawn from a multitude of classical sources from Augustus to Vitruvius for a frequency of 31.90 / 10 K (Crane).

7.10 Greek

In the Perseus Digital Library, the word θεός or *Theos* [God] appears 10,655 times out of 4,779,462 Greek words drawn from a multitude of classical sources from Aeschines to Xenophon for a frequency of 22.29 / 10 K (Crane).

7.11 Bengali

The Bengali words for God are *Bhagaban* and *Iššor*. The first occurs 3 times (Dabbs 20) and the second occurs twice (32) in a corpus of 43,961 words drawn from the February 12, 1962, issue of the *Ananda Bazar Newspaper*, published in Calcutta (Dabbs). The Persian, Urdu, and Arabic names for God, *Khuda* and *Allah*, did not appear once, perhaps a reflection of Calcutta's demographics of 76% Hindu and 23% Muslim or the secular nature of the publication.

In the EMILLE/CILL Corpus, there are 21 instances of ঈশ্বর [*Iššor*] in 824,699 words; 138 instances of ভগবান [*Bhagoban*] in 4,824,699 words (3 occurrences in 459,503 spoken words and 135 instances in 4,413,478 written words). The Urdu/Persian খোদা [*Khuda*] has a total of 3 instances in 4,824,699 words (2 occurrences in 459,503 spoken words and 1 in 4,413,478 written words) and আল্লাহ / আল্লা, the Arabic *Allah*, has 0 instances in 4,824,699 words.

Although Bangla has many idiomatic expressions employing the various names for God, including দুই সতিনের ঘর / খোদায় রক্ষা কর *dui satiner ghar, khoday raksa kar* [Only God can save the family of a man with co-wives]; যেকি দশ সেদিকেই খোদা *yedike dash sedikei khoda* [the voice of the people is the voice of God]; রাখে আল্লা মারে কে *rakhe allah mare ke* [If God protects, none can destroy], among many others; the overall frequency of the words are low in the language. In recent years, Mahfuzur Rahman has observed an interesting phenomenon: the name *Allah* in Bangladesh is sweeping away *Khuda* in both the written and spoken language: on billboards, on television, in political discourse and in daily communication by both adults and children. The supplantation of *Khuda* by *Allah* does not indicate an increase in theocentric expressions. Rather, it reflects the increasing “Islamization” of the country.³³

7.12 Urdu

In Stanislav Martyny's list of the 100 most frequent words for Urdu, drawn from a corpus of 440,929 words used in the electronic media, the words اَلّٰہ / *Khuda* [God] or *Allah* do not appear at all (7-10). Although some words of Persian and Arabic origin do occur in the 100 Urdu key words, which account for 50.65% of the Urdu corpus (11), with the exception of the word *Muslim*, which appears in 74th place (10), they do not form

³³ Editor's Note: This same phenomenon has been taking place in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India for many decades and is driven by Wahhabi/Salafi activists who claim that the use of *Khuda* is an “innovation” and thus “forbidden” in “Islam.”

part of a religious lexicon.

In a study of 136,738 words drawn from the Urdu press conducted in 1969, the name *Allah* appears only 30 times, in the expressions *Allah tabaraka wa ta'ala* [Great and Almighty Allah] and *Allah ta'ala* [Almighty Allah] making it the 576th most common word in the written Urdu of the media (Barker 357).³⁴

The EMILLE/CILL Corpus is, by far, the most extensive source of written and spoken Urdu for lexico-statistics. It consists of 3,020,339, tokens, 473,023 of which are spoken and 2,546,709 which are written. In this database, the name *Khuda* appears 1,157 times, namely, 38 times per million words; written: 30 per million words and spoken: 81 per million words. Interestingly, the name *Allah* [ٱللّٰه] did not occur even once, nor did *Rabb* [رَبّ], meaning “Lord,” which is the “non-sectarian” name for God. More recent research is required, particularly in the oral realm, as columnists like Ahmed Bashir have observed a significant linguistic development in Pakistan, the rapid transformation of *Khuda Hafiz* in Pakistan into *Allah Hafiz*, possibly as part of an “Islamic” resurgence, a phenomenon also occurring in Bangladesh (Hussein).³⁵

7.13 Hindi

In Stanislaw Martyny’s list of the 100 most frequent words for Hindi drawn from a corpus of 441,153 words used in the electronic media and accounting for 55.61% of the Hindi corpus, the words for god, *Ishvara*, *Parameshvara*, *Paramatma*, *Kartara*, and *Devata*, do not appear. On the basis of this research, the Hindu faith does not appear to have had a major impact on the Hindi language. The 33 million gods from the Hindu pantheon rarely make an appearance in the language of the Hindu media.

In the EMILLE/CILL Corpus, which is based on 13,510,420 tokens, 564,974 spoken ones and 12,942,981 written ones, the name *Ishvara* occurs 291 times, for a frequency of 20 per million words (20 per million words written and 10 per million

³⁴ Editor’s Note: A study of spoken Urdu is certainly in order to see whether in fact it is only the written press that is lacking in the Allah Lexicon or whether it is a reflection of the language as a whole.

³⁵ Editor’s Note: Ahmed Bashir wonders whether this change is indicative of anti-Iranian or anti-Persian sentiment. Intizar Hussain contextualizes this linguistic change:

In his time, Mawlana Ghulam Ahmad Pervaiz was very fond of using the term *ajamiyat* [foreigners] in a derogatory way. In his hands, this term came to mean something anti-Islamic, a term indicative of Iranian influence under which Islamic concepts lost their purity. It gave birth to a rejectionist attitude towards Persian terms for Islamic concepts and rituals. In Ziaul Haqq’s time, this trend won official approval... In fact, it was during this period that the idiomatic expression *Khuda Hafiz* underwent an amendment. *Khuda Hafiz* was replaced by *Allah*. Recently, a Maulvi talking in a TV program was heard saying that the true Islamic concept of one God is couched in the name of *Allah*, not in *Khuda*.

words spoken). The name *Parameshvara* occurs 93 times (10 per million written words and 0 per million spoken words). *Paramatma* appears 104 times (10 per million words written; and 30 per million words spoken). *Devata* was found 257 times, that is, 20 per million words (20 per million words written and 0 per million words spoken). As for the name *bhag-wan*, it is found 51 times in the Hindi component of the EMILLE Corpus which is 12,510,420 token. Interestingly, all of the occurrences were found among the 13,510,420 for written Hindi. The term did not have a single occurrence in the 564,974 tokens for the spoken language.

The expressions *Khuda Hafiz* and *Allah Hafiz* are still in currency in the country. However, as Rizwan Ahmad has observed during his fieldwork in Dehli, the same phenomenon of dropping the first in favor of the last is also occurring in India. As Ahmad attests, “sometimes it is strange to say *Khuda Hafiz* and receive an unexpected *Allah Hafiz*.” Based on the observations of Mahfuzur Rahman, Ahmed Bashir, and Rizwan Ahmad, this shift appears to be universally affecting the entire Indian subcontinent.

7.14 Bosnian

The *Oslo Corpus of Bosnian Texts* contains approximately 1.5 million words, and comprises several different genres: fiction [novels and short stories], essays, children's stories, folklore, Islamic texts, legal texts, as well as newspapers and journals. The texts, written by authors from Bosnia and Herzegovina, have for the most part been published in the 1990s. Out of 1.5 million words, *mislim* [Muslim] occurs 496 times, making it the 272nd most common word; *Muslimani* [Muslims] appears 304 times, making it the 443rd most common; *Bog* [God] appears 298 times, making it the 452nd most common; *god* [God] appears 272 times, making it the 497th most common; *muslimana* [Muslim] appears 243 times, making it the 549th most common; *Imam* [(prayer) leader] appears 241 times making it the 555th most common; *Allah* appears 151 times, making it the 905th most common; *Allahu* appears 78 times, *Islam* 55 and *Mohammed* 4 times.

7.15 Turkish

The Turkish words for God include *Allah*, *Tanrı*, and *İlah*. In Bigle Say's METU Turkish Corpus, a body of 2 million words drawn from written Turkish texts from various genres including samples from narratives, argumentative editorials and so forth, the word *Allah* and its inflected and derived forms occur 510 times, including over 20 Allah expressions. The word *İlah* and its inflected and derived forms occur 61 times; *Tanrı* [God, Father, Almighty, Creator, Divinity, Deity, Eternal, Godhead, the Infinite,

and the Providence] and its inflected and derived forms occur 486 times.

7.16 Persian

As the second scholarly and literary language of Islam, Persian deserves particular attention. With the Arabic conquest of the Sassanid Empire which took place from 643-650 A.D., a new language, religion and culture were added to the Persian cultural milieu. Arabic became the *lingua franca* or, better yet, *lingua arabica*: the language of government, literature, culture and religion. As a result, Persian, an Indo-European language, became profoundly Arabized, not so much in its grammar, but in its lexicon. According to the *Encyclopedia of the Orient*, 40% percent of the Persian vocabulary is of Arabic origin; according to Gernott L. Windfuhr, Professor of Iranian Studies at the University of Michigan, nativized Arabic loan-words represent 50% of the lexicon but only 25% of the colloquial language.³⁶ Persian is also important because it is the medium through which many words of Arabic origin passed into Turkish, Urdu and other languages.

The *Titus Database* contains several texts in Modern Persian, including, *Vis va Ramin*, Fakhr al-Din Gurgani's (d. 1048) epic poem, where the full form of the name *Allah* appears once while various form of *Khuda* appear 32 times; *Sindbad-Namah* by Ahmad bin 'Ali Zāhiri Samarqandi in which the expression *b'llah* [In (the name of) Allah] appears 4 times and Qabuli's *Ghazals*, where the various forms of *Allah* occur 5 times and the name *Khuda* occurs 24 times. Since *Vis va Ramin* deals with a consciously pre-Islamic milieu, it comes as no surprise that it is skewed in the direction of *Khuda*, as opposed to *Allah*.

Frequency lists from Sufi poetry provide a limited look into the frequency or lack thereof of the Persian Allah Lexicon. In the translation of Rumi's (d. 1273) *Masnawi*, the word *Allah* appears 29 times, and *God* 711 times out of a total of 98,681 occurrences of 8,159 word tokens. In the translation of *Gulistan* by Sa'di, the word *Allah* occurs 43 times, and the word *God* 84 times out of 54,764 occurrences of 5,984 word tokens. In the translation of *Teachings* by Hafiz (d. 14th c.) in his *Teachings*, the word *God* occurs 23 times out of 10,592 occurrences of 2,138 word tokens. In the Packard Humanities Institute's *Persian Texts in Translation*, comprising over 125 classical works, the word *God* appears 5,116 times and the word *Allah*, 800 times. The frequency analysis of translations, of course, is unscientific, since, in some cases, the word *Allah* may be

³⁶ Editor's Note: One Persian writer, Jamalzadah, has described the linguistic situation in Iran as one in which Western-oriented persons use foreign words freely, the clergy refers to Arabic terms and the average Iranian struggles to understand both (Arasteh 50).

rendered as *God* in English, thus inflating the occurrence of one word over another. Despite its shortcomings, the data indicates that Persian authors--even those who consciously and successfully incorporate many verses of the Qur'an in Persian meter--tend to refer to God as *Khuda* as opposed to *Allah*, a fact which can be confirmed by a survey of the original sources.

In Daniela Meneghini's *Lirica Persica Corpus*, which presents 20 separate samples of 1,000 lines taken from the *ghazal* collections of 20 great Persian poets, including Sana'i, Anvari, Khaqani, 'Attar, Rumi, 'Iraqi, Sa'di, Amir Khusraw, Khvaju Kirmani, Salman Savaji, Hafiz, Kamal Khujandi, Jami, Baba Fighani, Ahli, Vahshi, Naziri Nishaburi, Talib Amuli, Sa'ib and Bidil, the word *Khuda* appears 154 times independently, 10 times in compounds like *khudaparast* [*khodaparast*] and 7 times in derivative forms like *khudayi* [*khodayi*]. As for the word *Allah*, it occurs 125 times by itself, 15 times in derivative forms and 3 times in compounds.

In Meneghini's *The Ghazals of Hafiz: Concordance and Vocabulary*, the word *Ilah* [*Elah*], in various forms, occurs 39 times; and *Ilahi* [*Elahi*] 5 times (728). The word *Khuday* [*Xoday*] appears 122 times (833), and the word *Rabb* or "Lord" occurs 67 times (793). The most ancient of these words, *Yazdan*, appears once (838). The word *Rabb* is thus the 67th most common word in the *Ghazals* (848), followed by *Khuday* [*Xoday*], the 79th most common (847), and *Ilah* [*Elah*], the 223rd most common (848).

Clearly, the Arabic *Allah* is not particularly prevalent in the Persian sources we have surveyed.³⁷ Again, this may reflect more on Sufi poetry than on the Persian language as the same phenomenon is found in the Arabic Sufi poetry we examined. Case in point: the word *God* appears only once in the English translation of 'Umar Khayyam's *al-Ruba'iyyat*. The reduced range of the word *Allah* may also be a reflection of the Sufi predilection for using attributes of Allah, such as *al-Haqq* [The Truth / The Reality] and *al-Hayy* [The Living], as opposed to the divine name proper.

The corpora from TITUS and the Sufi poetry we have surveyed are rather less than ideal to find the frequency correlate of *Allah* vs. *Khuda* in Persian. Fortunately, Hamid Hasani has recently published a Persian book titled *The Most Frequent Words in Today's Persian*, which includes the 8,000 most frequently used words based on a

³⁷ Editor's Note: The sources we have relied upon reflect the Persian from Iran. The impression of Dr. Franklin Lewis, Assistant Professor in the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at Emory University and President of American Institute for Iranian Studies, is that *Allah* is more frequent in Dari Persian of Afghanistan than in Iranian Persian and that it is even less frequent in the Persian of Tajikistan. Whether this is indeed the case from a scientific standpoint remains to be explored.

million word corpus based on 80 texts and over 500 subtexts of contemporary Persian. The texts include 62 books published by IICYA, mostly written over the past ten years, and including 608,350 words; 14 journals from the children and youth sections of newspapers; complete issues of 11 journals and seven pages of seven other issues including 396,240 words. Out of one million words, *Khuda* occurs 580 times while *Allah* does not appear at all, with the exception of *Ilahi* which occurs 70 times and *Ya Allah* [O Allah] which appears 19 times. According to Ma'sumeh G. Shambayati, an Iranian sociologist:

[T]he reason for not including *Allah* in this book may be because we usually don't use it in our communication as it is Arabic and we have a common Persian word for it [*Khuda*].... *Allah*, most of the time, is used for praying.

This preference for the Persian *Khuda*, *Khudavand* and *Yazdan* over the Arabic *Allah* has been established by our frequency analysis of the works of over thirty Persian poets found in the *Persopedia Corpora*.

Table 5: Frequency of “God” in Persian Poetry

Poet	<i>Allah</i>	<i>Khuda</i>	<i>Khudavand</i>	<i>Yazdan</i>
Abu Sa'id Abi al-Khayr	14	26	1	0
Anvari	18	12	64	38
Awhadi Maragha'i	6	82	5	6
Baba Tahir	3	7	0	1
Bahar	1	6	3	7
Parvin I'tisami	1	16	4	1
Jami	12	16	6	4
Hafiz Shirazi	21	91	0	1
Khaqani	125	38	7	17
Khvaju Kirmani	6	15	6	0
Daqiqi	0	1	3	5
Dihlavi	14	25	15	15
Rudaki	1	0	5	2
Sa'di	34	70	71	10
Sa'd Salman	0	0	3	1
Sana'i	42	20	19	29
Sayf Farghani	3	6	4	1
Shabistari	14	6	0	1

Shaykh Baha'i	15	15	1	1
'Ubayd Zakani	3	16	0	8
'Iraqi	7	9	0	0
'Attar	15	38	7	4
Firdowsi	1	4	179	764
Farughi Bastami	10	69	4	6
Muhtasham Kashani	5	87	12	9
Manuchihri Damghani	1	8	21	4
Mawlavi	410	807	96	125
Nizami Ganjavi	10	107	64	35
Shahriyar	0	29	1	0
Tabrizi	0	10	1	0
Farrukhi Sistani	0	3	22	7
Vahshi Bafqi	16	44	7	4
Hatif Isfahani	12	27	0	0
Nasir Khusraw	0	15	87	68
Total	820	1,725	718	1,174

Statistically, the Arabic *Allah* occurs 820 times and the Persian words for God, 3,617 times, with 1,725 occurrences of *Khuda*, 718 instances of *Khudavand*, and 1,174 cases of *Yazdan*. Other Persian names for God, like *Parvadigar* and *Afarinandah*, did not appear at all. The differing use of the various words of God in each author is, in itself, a fascinating subject, worthy of in-depth investigation. For our purposes, it suffices to demonstrate the general preference for the indigenous Persian names for God over the Arabic *Allah*. The most popular divine name among the Persian poets would be *Khuda*, which has roughly twice the frequency of *Allah*. In second place is the name *Khudavand* which is slightly more popular than *Allah* which comes in third place before *Yazdan* which falls in fourth place. Evidently, this excludes Firdowsi's extensive use of *Yazdan*, which would otherwise tilt the scale.³⁸

All of the data drawn from Persian lexico-statistics indicates that the frequency of

³⁸ Editor's Note: The poet's extensive use of *Yazdan* was part of his attempt to "purify" the Persian language. The results for Firdowsi clearly demonstrate his preference for "pure" Persian, with 764 occurrences of *Yazdan*, 179 cases of *Khudavand*, 4 cases of *Khuda* and 1 case of *Allah*. Fascinatingly, the frequency of these words and their order reflects the order of their linguistic appearance. *Yazdan*, the most ancient of these words for God, is used intensively, *Khudavand*, to a large extent, *Khuda*, occasionally, and *Allah*, a single time. The same trend can be seen in the poetry of Nasir Khusraw.

word “God” in Persian is similar to that found in other Indo-European languages. A comparative seven-day search of English, Persian and Arabic newspapers conducted in November 2005 seems to corroborate that the Persian use of God is consistent with that found in other languages, with the exception of Arabic, which is unique in this regard:

Table 6: Frequency of “God” in English, Persian, and Arabic Newspapers

Newspaper	Language	Country	Frequency	Word
<i>Toronto Star</i>	English	Canada	15	God
<i>Globe and Mail</i>	English	Canada	28	God
<i>New York Times</i>	English	U.S.A.	63	God
<i>Chicago Tribune</i>	English	U.S.A.	62	God
<i>LA Times</i>	English	U.S.A.	50	God
<i>The Independent</i>	English	U.K.	49	God
<i>IRIB</i>	Persian	Iran	12 / 7	Allah / Khuda
<i>Iran Newspaper</i>	Persian	Iran	74 / 35	Allah / Khuda
<i>Iran Daily</i>	Persian	Iran	3 / 0	Allah/ Khuda
<i>al-Hayat</i>	Arabic	England	107	Allah
<i>al-Ayyam</i>	Arabic	Bahrain	+ 100	Allah
<i>al-Rayah</i>	Arabic	Qatar	+ 130	Allah
<i>al-Khalij</i>	Arabic	U.A.E.	+ 225	Allah

As can be observed, the English language newspapers average 45 references to God; the Persian ones average 44 references to God and the Arabic ones average over 140, reasserting its uniqueness. Not factored into the Arabic statistics is *al-Wifaq*, an Arabic-language newspaper published in Iran which reported 38 instances of *Allah* and one of *Khuda* hinting that the culture of the speaker, and not the language itself, is the driving force behind the Allah Lexicon. How else could one account for the radical reduction in Allah/Khuda expressions by Arabic-speaking Iranians?

7.17 Malaysian

In Ian Proudfoot’s *Malay Concordance Project*, a survey of a large corpus of classical Malay prose and verse texts covering over 1.7 million words, the name *Allah* occurs 3,462 times, a total overall average frequency of 2.8 times per 1,000 words. In some individual religious texts, however, the word *Allah* had a frequency of up to 20.9 / 1,000. The word *tuhan* [god] appears 1,255 times with a frequency of 0.8; *batara* [god] 811 times with a frequency of 1.4; *dewa* [deity] 795 times with a frequency of 0.7; and

various forms of *ilah*, 163 times, including *berilah* 74; *diberilah* 27 [I take refuge in Allah]; *ilah* 6; *ilahi* 39, *menberilah* 15 and *menterilah* 2. The expression *masya Allah* appears 4 times, and *masha' Allah* [It is the will of Allah] occurs once.

7.18 African Languages:

Fulfulde, Somali, Oromo, Mossi, Swahili, Yoruba, Zarma, Hausa, Wolof, and Mandinka

The Fulfulde or Fulani language is spoken in Central and West Africa, including Sudan, Niger, Mali, Senegal, and Cameroon.³⁹ According to Scott Clark, who has worked among the Fulbe for twenty years, Fulfulbe is not a lingua franca in these countries, though in Cameroon it is an important language of wider communication. So, the Fulbe in Nigeria must speak Hausa to get around or Sango in the Central African Republic. According to Paulène Aspel, the Fulfulbe language is “a complex linguistic mixture of old Arabic vocabulary and syntactical forms borrowed either unchanged or Fulanized, usually pertaining to religious matters” (189). This statement gives the impression that Fulfulbe is a “mixed language,” one having the vocabulary from one language, but the structure from another. This is incorrect. Furthermore, most of the Arabic vocabulary in Fulfulbe is limited to the domains of religion and warfare. The vocabulary of daily life is not “old Arabic vocabulary,” though some devout Muslim Fulbe would no doubt like to think that. While a frequency dictionary does not exist for this language, a survey of its literature reveals a preponderance of Allah expressions. As Aspel observes, “[t]he Arabic influence seems to be strong...on this kind of literature” which is based on Arabic models (180). According to Aspel, three main types of formulae trigger the attention of the interested one who stands on the threshold of the Fulfulbe poetry from the Adamawa:

He is first greeted with these words: *Allah senido!* [God, the Holy One!]. *Allah* is the central core word, many times repeated, alone, inflected or in combined expressions. The three categories where it appears are: a) the noun-epithet formulas; b) the prefixed and suffixed *Allah*, and c) the verb formulas with *Allah* as object. In 225 lines of a dozen poems by Bellow dow Keerol, *Allah* alone or in combination appears 51 times. It occurs forty five times in 440 lines of Moodi

³⁹ The Fulbe people are called “Fulani” by Hausa and English speakers in Nigeria and the French call them “Peul.” The Fulbe who live in the bush are called Mbororo. They all speak the same language called “Fulfulde.” The singular of Fulbe is Pullo. The written form of the language, using Arabic script, is known as *ajamiya*.

Yaawa's ten poems; forty eight times in ten poems and 313 lines by Buuba Jariida; twenty one times in the three poems of 195 lines by Hamaseyo; and four times in each of respectively Isa Dembo and Sambo Didi's single poem selected. (178)

The most frequent of the noun-epithet formulas is *Allah senido*. Other common forms are *Allah sarki* [Allah Almighty], *Allah teddu'do* [Glorious Allah], the word *teddu'do* meaning "heavy," the Hebrew root for "glory," as well as *Allah barkini* [Blessed by Allah]. The most frequent inflected nouns are *lillahi* [(Praise be) to Allah], *Allahi* [Thanks be to Allah], *wa Allahi* [By Allah], *billahi* [(I seek refuge) in Allah] and *Bismillahi* [In the name of Allah] (179). Other examples of the Allah Lexicon in Fulfulbe poetry include the anaphora *mi yettoyi Allah* [I do thank Allah] in three odes by Hamaseyo, and the formula *Allah yafam*, *Allah hokkam*, *Allah hisnam* [Allah forgive me; Allah give me; Allah save me] from the poet Moodi Yaawa (179).

Indeed, as Pierre Francis Lacroix explains in the first chapter of *Poésie peule*, the Fulbe society of Adamawa, "née de l'Islam...en est restée profondément imprégnée" ["Born from Islam...it has remained profoundly marked by it"] (qtd. in Aspel 179). According to all assessments, "Islam in a broad sense has penetrated greatly among the Fulbe" (Shimada 95). The key cultural concepts in Fulbe culture are 1) *pulaaku*, tradition or Fulbeness; 2) *diina* or the Islamic religion; and 3) *daraja* or honor (VerEecke 146; Kazuhisa Eguchi 181). Among the Fulbe of Adamawa

[r]eligious faith runs deep and sincere, is accompanied by no more superstitious practices or beliefs than subsist among the majority of the Muslims in the Middle East or the Maghreb, and moreover harbors no typically "African" traits. The faith--of a "quality," dare one say it, which is rather rare in black West Africa--has never been ground down, among the majority of those concerned, by its contact with economic conditions or modern politics, and even seems to have been refined in certain aspects in the last few decades. (Lacroix: 1980: 206)

The most common feature among the Fulbe, from West Africa to the Sudan, is the "[s]trong Islamic consciousness as the basis of their Islamic identity" (Hino 84). For the Fulbe, Islam [*diina*] is a significant moral code and ethnic marker:

Its core components include abiding by the Five Pillars of Islam, having piety, faith, "shame," kindness or charity, mutual respect, along with telling the truth...and raising one's children in Islam. Because of their similarities, the codes

of *diina* and *pulaaku* are said to complement each other. It is not surprising, therefore, to find individuals or even entire communities in Adamawa making little distinction between the two, or considering *diina* a component of *pulaaku*. (VerEecke 148)

For the Fulbe, Islamization did not induce a simple identity change limited to the religious and moral level: “All aspects of Fulbe lives--moral, religious, economic, material, social, cultural and political--were affected” (Shimada 95).

According to Aspel, “[i]n Fulbe culture, religion and ethics seem to be closely interrelated, the praise of Allah is constantly blended and/or supported by laudatory verse to the Arab-white color” (Aspel 181). Reading Aspel, one gets the impression that the Fulbe love Allah and love the Arabs. This is not exactly the case. It would be hard to find a Fulbe saying that he “loves Allah,”--he would fear Him, but never “love” Him. Furthermore, loving the Arabs would be a stretch. The Fulbe are certainly grateful that the Arabs brought them the message of Islam. However, many of the Arabs come and want them to lose their mother tongue, Fulfulde, in favor of Arabic, something which the Fulbe are generally greatly against. The Sudanese Fulbe, however, often do speak Arabic as their mother tongue instead of Fulfulde as they are in the process of Arabization (Hino 83). Nonetheless, they continue to retain much of their traditional Fulbe culture in their daily life. According to Shun’ya Hino, the Fulbe sometimes criticize the way of life of the Arab Muslims as corrupt and hypocritical, compared to Fulbe piety and profound Islamic belief (83). This profound commitment to Islam has endowed Fulbe society with a rich oral and written culture saturated with semi-Africanized Allah expressions. In this regard, the Fulbe are unique among non-Arab Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Editor’s Note: With the exception of the Arabs and the Fulbe, the degree of Islamization in sub-Saharan Africa has generally been superficial. As J. Spence Trimingham notes, “Islam in Africa south of the Sahara was a very marginal region in relation to the wider Islamic world” (1). As J.A.K. Leslie observed with regards to colonial Dar es Salam, “The vast majority of the population are Muslims, but many of these are really pagans in Muslim clothes” (qtd. in Trimingham 107). The superficiality of Islam among many black Africans was the very justification for the jihad of ‘Usman bi Fudi. As his son, Muhammad Belo (d. 1837), described:

Islam was brought to this country [Bornu] by traders and travelers. Whoever wished adopted the faith; some practicing it as sincerely as they were able to, others mingling it with elements which nullified it. Such was the case with the majority of the kings of the country; they adopted Islam, confessed to the unity of God, observed ritual prayer and fast, yet never got rid of their inherited practices, nor abandoned one whit of their customs (qtd. in Trimingham 19).

As I.M. Lewis explains with regards to the Songhay Empire, of which the Zarma are descendants:

As for the rest of black Africa, the spread of the Allah Lexicon seems to be associated with the degree of Islamization and Arabization. In the words of Trimingham,

The spread of a religion possessing a sacred scripture sets up an interrelationship between the sacred language and the languages of the people who adopt the religion. This is especially the case with Arabic. In Hamitic-speaking Africa Islamization was accompanied by Arabization, and the effect we have shown to be profound, but in Negro Africa Islam was spread almost entirely by Africans and Arabic was not envisaged as a living language. Thus the great divide between white (Hamitic) and black (Negro) Africa has been perpetuated by language, for whilst the spread of Islam has been accompanied by the absorption of words and expressions into African languages, in Negro Africa the mediating factor has been the law books in the memories of the clergy. Arabic in Negro Africa was wholly a sacred language with little or no secular usages. Few colloquial or daily-life words penetrated, [with the exception of expressions like *barka*, *baraka*, *bismillah*, *insha' Allah*, *wa Allahi* and *alhamdulillah* which are very common among all Islamized groups in black Africa: the Zarma, the Hausa, the Kanuri, the Fulbe, the Tamacheq, and so forth], but the language of the law books has enriched the languages of Muslims with hundreds of religious, political, commercial and abstract words and expressions. (101) [the addendum is ours]

In much of black Africa, traditional concepts of a supreme power or spirit, a High God, seem generally to be readily identified with Allah (Lewis 61). For the Somali and the Muslim Oromo, known in the past by the pejorative term Galla, the pre-Islamic conception of the Cushitic sky god *waq* had many elements in common with the Muslim idea of Allah (Lewis 274). Consequently, the god *waq* was readily assimilated to Allah

Islamization...was restricted mainly to the ruling dynasties and chief administrators of the various kingdoms and, as one would expect, it was only the capital cities and other large centers where Islam had much effect, and even in these places its influence was only partial. From al-Mahili's "Replies" it is evident that the situation was much the same as situation 'Uthman b. Fudi complained of in Hausaland four centuries later. Most so-called Muslims were half-hearted in their allegiance to Islam and, while making a lip-profession of faith, still believe in other gods whom they called upon in their shrines and at their sacred rocks and trees. Free women walked about unveiled except in Timbuktu...and in Jenne young girls customarily walked entirely naked until marriage...By the time of the Moroccan invasion in 1591 there seems to have been a marked relapse into paganism. (134)

While Paul Balta is correct in asserting that the Islam practiced in much of black Africa is "façonné par les traditions locales tells le culte de la nature et l'animisme" (84) [influenced by local tradition such as the cult of nature and animism], it should be recalled that there are many different levels of Islamic participation in the continent from nominal Muslims who remain profoundly pagan, to deeply committed Muslims.

(Lewis 61). The Muslim Oromo and the Somali call Allah by the words formerly used for the Cushitic god, with the same connotations (Lewis 274). Among the Somali, the name *waq* is used in a common expression of sacrifice (*waqda'in*: lit. "offering to God"). Besides *Alla* and *Waq*, the Somali also refer to God as *rabbi*, *alle* and *eebbe*.⁴¹ For the Mossi, the otiose deity *winam* became the equivalent of Allah; and the Nupe equated their traditional deity *soko* with Him as well (Lewis 61). Among the Swahili in East Africa, the traditional creator God *mungu* became associated with Allah (Lewis 61). The Swahili expression for God Almighty is *Jicho la Mungu*. Besides Mungu and Allah, the Bantu refer to God as *rabi*, and *rahimi*. They use the expression *wallah* as well as *lahaula*, a truncated form of the Arabic *la hawla wa la quwwata illa billah*, in the sense of "God forbid!" Like the Bantu, the Yoruba who embraced Islam also identified their traditional High God--in this case *Olorin* or *Olodumare*--with Allah. Among the Zarma, the name for God is *irikoy*. It is used in expressions like *Irikoy ma albarka day ay izo ga* [May God bless my son]; *Irikoy m'iri cebe yesi (nda baani "or" mansancine)* [May God show us next year (in health "or" as now)]. In the first expression, the Arabic word for blessing has been borrowed along with its article. The word *Allah* is mainly limited to the oath *walla* used by most Zarmas at the end of statements. It means "by Allah," and is short for *Wa Allahi* [(I swear) by Allah]. Generally speaking, the old term for God is frequently retained alongside the newly acquired term Allah, and both names are viewed as synonymous, the Arabic term is reserved principally for use in poetry and in stock Arabic expressions, phrases and exclamations, while the indigenous name is invoked in informal subjective prayer [*du'a*] (Lewis 61; Trimmingham 55).

In the case of cultures where there was apparently no distinct pre-Islamic name for a supreme deity--if the concept was ever entertained at all--vernacular terms equivalent to the English "Master" or "Lord" are applied to Allah (Lewis 61). In other instances, the name Allah came to fill that void. In Hausa, the name for God is Allah and it is used in various expressions and interjections including: *Insha' Allah* [If Allah will]; *Allah ta'ala* [Allah Almighty]; *Allah ya sawwak'a* [Allah save you]; *Allah wadanka*

⁴¹ Editor's Note: The Somali are among the earliest people to be converted to Islam, having embraced it in the ninth and tenth centuries. Since then, "Islam has been an integral part of their culture--to be Somali is to be Muslim" (Lullin 364). As I.M. Lewis has noted, "the Somali as a whole, and this should be emphasized, are highly orthodox and inclined to a fervent and deep attachment to their faith" (242). Despite their black African origin, and the fact that they speak a Cushitic language, Somalians are often identified as Arabs, so much so that Somalia is a member of the Arab League. Although its influence has diminished due to the official spread of Somalian, the Arabic language is still widely spoken in the country, particularly among those who are middle-aged and older. A study of these bilingual speakers would shed light on the transfer of the Arabic Allah Lexicon into the Somali language.

[Allah shall curse you] and *Jalla* [Praise Allah]. In Wolof the name for God is *yalla*, an Africanized pronunciation of the Arabic *Ya Allah* or “O Allah.” Some of the Allah expressions in Wolof include *Nit ñi ñep deñu wara wox alxamdulilaa* [All people should say Praise be to Allah]; *Yaala buur la* [Allah is Great]; *Dagaan yaala lu baaxla* [To worship Allah is a very good thing] and *Giñ naa ci turi yaala* [I swear in the name of Allah]. In Mandinka, the name for Almighty God is *Ala*. Godliness is *Ala ñaasilajo* and fearing God is *Ala ñaasilajo*. The Mandinka have a rich repertoire of Allah expressions, including: *Tenturro be Ala ye* [Praise be to Allah]; *Da n tuku Ala la* [Let’s rely on Allah]; *Ala le mu soorilaa ti* [Allah is the one who offers]; *Kana Ala sooki* [Don’t go against Allah]; *Bannaayaa mu Ala la sooro le ti* [Wealthiness is Allah’s gift]; *Ala maaitanka la seetani la* [May Allah protect you from Satan]; *Ala la mansabaayaa man naane soto* [Allah’s mightiness has no limit]; *Ala maa ñ ñaa jamaa la kayira kono* [May Allah let us meet again in peace]; *Ala be moo kurunolu jihadi la* [Allah will torment the evil people]; *Kana Ala fulankafu niñ i mu misilimoo ti* [Don’t associate Allah with others if you are Muslim]; *Ala mu mansa fondinsire le ti* [Allah is a merciful King]; *Alaladaaroo* [Allah’s creation]; *Bisimilaay* [Allah’s name]; *Yaala rek laa dee jaamu* [I adore only Allah]; *Jeebalu leen ci yaala* [Give yourself up to Allah]; *Ala warate le* [Allah is Great].

7.19 Russian

According to Serge Sharoff’s *Frequency Dictionary for Russian*, which is based on a corpus of 40 million words, the Russian name for God, *6or*, is the 244th most common word, appearing 376 times. An earlier study conducted by Brown showed it was the 593rd most common word (39). Prof. Lennart Lönngren’s *Uppsala Corpus* of one million Russian words consists of 600 Russian texts equally divided between informative prose from 1985-89 and literary prose from 1960-88, drawn from the works of 40 authors from Abramov to Zorin. The compilers assured that the corpus was representative and varied with vocabulary from 25 different subject areas. Out of one million words in the *Uppsala Corpus*, the word *6or* appears 72 times. As for spoken Russian, the word *6or* appears 31 times in the Corpus of Interviews, composed of interviews conducted from 1996 to the present with topics ranging from music, society, economy, and literature to lifestyle and sports.

7.20 Japanese

In Charles Kelley’s *Japanese Newspaper Word Frequency List*, the word *kami* [god] is the 664th most common word out of a corpus of 300,000 words drawn from the Japanese press. However, according to the *List of Japanese Words* published on the web

site of the Sakuragoaka High School in Tokyo, Japan, the Japanese word for *god* comes in 4,568th place, appearing only four times, in a corpus of 282,918 word tokens consisting of 8,481 original words collected from a number of 20th century novels and stories. In Tadashi Kikuoka's *Japanese Newspaper Compound: The 1,000 Most Important in Order of Frequency*, the word 神 *kami* [god] does not appear even once. If one looks at the 20 most common words in Arabic, the word Allah appears prominently. In Japanese, the 20 most common words are related to capitalism, business, money, and government, including: *iin* [committee member], *seefu* [government], *keezai* [economy / finance], *rōdō* [labor], *jimu* [business], *minshu* [democratic], *kaisha* [company / corporation], and so forth. The most frequent Japanese words may reflect a secular materialistic worldview, whereas the most frequent Arabic words may reflect a spiritual worldview. In Japanese, even the concept of God appears to the outsider to manifest a materialistic mentality. Although the Japanese word *kami* is often translated as “god,” the word in fact means “spirit,” “soul,” or “mind.” In other words, according to the Japanese worldview, God is in each person's mind; God is the energy inside our intellects, an idea quite similar to the Marxist conception of God as a dimension of human beings. As Masahiko Minami explains,

Japanese religions are naturalistic onese, as can be seen in Shintoism, which grew out of everyday life of the Japanese people in primitive times. The word *kami* has a homophone *kami*, which means “the top, head, or upper part.” This may be my opinion, but *kami* as the god and *kami* as the top are in a sense synonymous.

Although the data regarding the frequency of the Chinese character 神 *kami* or god in the Japanese language is not entirely consistent, it is clear that it is not used very frequently and when it does appear, it is often in conjunction with other characters.

7.21 Chinese

According to Patrick Hassel Zeim's *5,000 Chinese Characters in Order of Frequency*, the Chinese character for God, or *shén* in Mandarin, is the 226th most common in written texts in modern mainland China. The first 250 characters cover around 60% of any written text in the region. In Tony McEnery and Richard Xiao's *Lancaster Corpus of Mandarin Chinese*, the word 上帝, *Shang Di* or *Shang Ti* [God, lit. “Lord Above,” “Sovereign Above,” or “Lord On High”] appears 28 times per million words in the written corpus and occurs 14 times per million in Richard Xiao and Hongyin Tao's *Lancaster Los Angeles Spoken Chinese Corpus*. As for the word *shén*, it occurs 142 times per million in the LCMC and 13 times per million in the LLSCC. According to Jun

Da's "Character Frequency List" from the Xin Yu Si Electronic Books Collection, the word *shén* comes in 159th place with a raw frequency of 22,973, a cumulative frequency of 10,285,196, and a cumulative percentage of 53.5078% based on a 45 million character corpus.

These statistics, it should be noted, are reflective of Chinese society as a whole, the vast majority of which is Taoist and Buddhist. Estimates of the Muslim population in China vary from 1-2% to 10%, namely between 13 to 130 million people out of a total population of over 1.3 billion. According to other sources, the population may range from 20 to 200 million. The Muslims in China are made up of ten officially recognized ethnic minorities: the Uighur, the Karak, the Kyrgyz, the Uzbek, the Tatar, and the Salar who are Turkish people; the Dongxiang and the Baoan or Bonan who are of Mongolian origin, the Tajik who are of Persian origin; and finally, the Hui, who are of Chinese origin and who represent half of the Muslim population in the country. Our focus in this section is on the Hui as they are ethnic Chinese. An analysis of the Allah Lexicon among the other nine Muslim groups should become the subject of subsequent studies.

Determining the frequency of the words Allah and God among Chinese-speaking Muslims, known as the Hui [pronounced "whey"], is presently impossible and would require the compilation of a corpus of Hui speech. Although the Hui in China primarily speak the language and dialects spoken by the people among whom they live, "they have nevertheless infused these mainly Chinese (Han) languages with Islamic terminology derived from several sources, including Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and other Central Asian languages" (Gladney 393). Known as "Hui speech" [*Huihui hua*], the phrases and vocabulary items do not comprise a language but serve as linguistic markers of ethnic and religious identity (393). Hui speech represents a unique mix of Chinese and foreign languages, permeated by translations and transliterations of Islamic lexical items (393).

While Qur'anic Arabic is used in Hui Islamic ritual, it has never served as a common language for communication. Hui do use certain Persian and Arabic loan words...that are unintelligible to Han, but these in no way constitute a separate language. Of course, to the Hui themselves, these distinctive non-Han expressions of speech, though not a separate language in any sense, continue to serve as important markers of ethnic identity. (68)

Dru C. Gladney has observed that the use of these terms generally marks outsider/insider status, as Huis often use the Arabic or Persian-derived terms among one another, saving

the Chinese terms for when they speak with non-Muslim Han (394). He also noted that daily speech in Hui villages or neighborhoods appeared to be more influenced by Persian, whereas theological terminology used in the mosque by the *ahong* [teacher] and the *manla* [religious student] was dominated more by Arabic-derived terms (394).

The Muslim Chinese traditionally refer to Islam as 清真 *Qing Zhen*, “Pure Way” or “Pure Life.” They also use the more modern term *Yisilam*. The Muslim Chinese refer to Allah as *Zhen Zhu* [the True Lord or True God], *Zhen Zai* [the Primal Cause]. The Arabic *Allah* is also used; however, it is phonetically adjusted to Chinese as *An la*, *Ahla*, *Ahlahu*, and *Anlahu*. The Allah Lexicon of the Hui includes *Bisimingle* [from the Arabic *Bismillah* or In the Name of Allah], *Anlahu ahkebai* [Allah is the Greatest], *Anlahuteahlia* [Great Allah], *Hudeteahlia* [Most Exalted God], *Yiliaxi*, [My god], *Yizede*, *teahli*, [Most holy and exalted Allah], *Hangeteahli*, “True God” and *Zhenzhu baoyou* or “Allah protected me.” The Hui also refer to God as *Hu da*, the Chinese pronunciation of the Persian *Khuda*. They employ the following expressions from the Khuda Lexicon: *Balehudaya* [Great God] and *Hudaya* [My God]. They also employ implied Allah expressions like *Sewabu*, from the Arabic *thawwab*, meaning reward. It is used among the Hui as an expression of thanks with the sense of “May Allah reward you.” As Hui speech does not contain any non-Chinese verbs, the Allah Lexicon in Chinese is limited to a body of already integrated expressions with little possibility of further growth and development.

8. Validity of Data and Methodology

The question of the validity of the frequency data we have provided is sure to arise. Some scholars may argue that the results of our research are debatable and questionable. While a frequency analysis based on several hundred or several thousand words can be called into question, the same cannot be said of comprehensive studies in corpus linguistics based on hundreds of thousands and even millions of words drawn from a multitude of sources, both written and spoken, as the larger the size of the sample, the greater is the probability of its accuracy. While more work should be done on the subject, the corpora we have consulted, which represent 50 to 100% of the vocabulary of their respective languages, are statistically sound and relatively accurate in representing lexical frequency.⁴² Those who object to these results may simply not want to give weight

⁴² Editor’s Note: The scientific accuracy of this study is in stark contrast to “opinions” and “impressions.” In his article “Khoda Hafez versus Allah Hafez: A critical inquiry”

or import to this body of theocentric language or see how its presence or absence could impact comfort, confidence, and faith. If there is room for debate, it resides primarily in the realm of interpretation. It may be argued that the religiosity of a people cannot be determined solely on the basis of one word: *Allah* or its equivalent in other languages. However, this would be a misconstruction of our methodology. Our objective in this study is not to assert that Arab Muslims are more religious than others, but to establish, through an initial analysis, that the Arabic language possesses a unique language feature: an unusually high preponderance of religious, theocentric, invocations and idioms, worthy of investigation. Having established the frequency of *Allah* in the Arabic language, we can now examine its function.

9. Surprises

When we started this study, we postulated that the spread of Islam among Arabs, Persians, Indians, and other groups of people, led to an “Islamization” of both language and culture. We expected to find that the frequency of the Allah Lexicon was highest in Arabic, then in Persian, then in Urdu, then in other Islamic languages. We predicted that the longer a people have been Muslim and the more deep-rooted the Islamic influence has been, the more entrenched the Allah Lexicon would be in their languages in both frequency and diversity. The Arabs were the first to embrace Islam, then the Persians, the Turks, the Indians, and other nations of the world. The longer a people have been exposed to Islam, we believed, the more they had infused in the Muslim faith, the more their language would reflect their religion. We anticipated that Arabic would use more Allah expressions than other Islamic languages, but we expected those Islamic languages to use Allah expressions to a great extent. From the onset, we were convinced that, at the very least, the frequency of the word *God* would be higher among Muslims than among non-Muslims. We were certainly in the wrong.

Although there is no doubt that Arabic is an ocean of Allah expressions, and that the word *Allah* is the most frequent lexical item in the Arabic language, the same cannot

Mahfuzur Rahman claims that “In terms of its usage in everyday life, [*Khuda*]...is at least as common as *Allah*, perhaps more so.” *In Man in Society in Iran*, A. Reza Arasteh claims that “Persians commonly use the expression *insha’ Allah* [If God wills]” (42). Dr. Franklin Lewis’ initial impression, which he admitted was unscientific, was that “Rumi’s *Masnavi* consciously and successfully incorporates many verses of the Qur’an in Persian meter, so it must be skewed toward Allah—but it talks about the deity far more than *Vis and Gurgan* does, which being a consciously pre-Islamic milieu, would be skewed in the other direction, toward *Khuda*.” As the reader will note in the Persian section of chapter one, this is not the case. During the course of our research we came across Pakistanis who claimed specifically that *Allah* was the 15th most common word in Urdu and Persians who insisted that they used Allah expressions as often as Arabs did, without any scientific proof to support their claims. When presented with the facts, many non-Arabs were defensive and often unwilling to accept the evidence.

be said about other “Islamic” languages. As can be seen from the following chart, the frequency of the word “God” is a salient and most distinguishable feature of the Arabic language, regardless of variations in corpora and methods of frequency analysis:

Table 7: Frequency Ranking for “God” in Eleven Languages

Language	Frequency Ranking for “God”
Arabic	1 st , 3 rd or 18 th to 76 th
English	97 th to 292 nd
Spanish	107 th
Chinese	159 th to 226 th
Russian	244 th
French	263 rd
Rumanian	495 th
Urdu	576 th
Bosnian	905 th
Italian	1,610 th
Japanese	664 th to 4,568 th

This unusually high frequency of the word *Allah* is not found in other languages of Islam. In Malaysian, the word *Allah* appears 2.8 times per 1,000 words. The Bengali words for *God* rarely occur at all in the printed Bengali of Calcutta. The word *Allah* is the 576th most common word in the language of the Urdu press, meaning that Russians, after 70 years of atheistic communism, may refer to God almost as often as Pakistani Muslims do. In the Persian sources we have examined, the word *Allah* is not particularly prevalent. It may be argued that, from a very early time, the Persian / Urdu *Khuda* came to function as a substitute for *Allah* and this explains the lower incidence of Allah expressions.⁴³ The preference of the Persian *Khuda* over the Arabic *Allah* is not an unusual or unexpected phenomenon, but rather the natural result of Persian linguistic nationalism. It does not, however, explain the reduced rate of religious expressions in Persian, using *Allah* or *Khuda*.

⁴³ Editor’s Note: As Intizar Hussain explains, the sacred name *Khuda* “has undergone a long process at the hands of Muslim poets, thinkers and religious scholars, assimilating the devotional feelings and thoughts we associate with *Allah*.” As a result, “It has gained a status equivalent to that of *Allah*, finding the same position in Muslim thought and the collective imagination of Muslim people.”

The Persians do indeed use some common Allah expressions like *bismillah* [In the name of Allah], *insha' Allah* [Allah willing], *subhana Allah* [Glory be to Allah], *la ilaha illa Allah* [There is no god but Allah], *alhamdulillah* [Praise be to Allah], *astaghfirullah* [I ask forgiveness from Allah], *fatabarak Allah* [Praise and Might belongs to Allah], *a'udhu billah* [I take refuge in Allah], *tawakkaltu 'ala Allah* [I put my trust in Allah] and *la'natu Allah* [May Allah curse], but their general inclination is to employ *Khuda* in virtually every other instance. This is consistent with Yavar Dehghani's impression that "the word *Allah* is just restricted to religious contexts [*Allahu Akbar*, *Bismillah*]; otherwise, it is only the word *Khuda* which is used in conversation." The relatively rare use of the name *Allah* in Persian is curious since much, if not the majority, of its vocabulary is taken from Arabic.

While Urdu speaking Muslims say both *Khuda Hafiz* and *Allah Hafiz*, the Persians only say *Khuda Hafiz*. Some insist on saying *la'natu Khuda* [May Khuda curse] rather than *la'natu Allah* [May Allah curse] and *Binami Khuda* [In the name of Khuda] rather than *Bismillah* [In the name of Allah]. Rather than saying *Allah yu'tik al-sihhah* [May Allah give you good health], they say *'afiyah* [good health] and instead of *inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un* [From Allah we come and to Him is our return] they say *tasliyyah* or "my condolences."

In the time of the Shah of Iran, the traditional greeting was a simple *salam* [peace]. With the advent of Khomeini's revolution, the complete Islamic greeting, *salamu 'alaykum*, came into vogue, as did other Arabic expressions. With the polarization of the Iranian populace into conservatives and reformers, many "progressive" people have returned to their old linguistic habits of saying *Khuda* rather than *Allah* in an attempt to disassociate themselves from the religious right.

With the exception of Arabic, the data indicates that the word "God" often appears less in "Muslim languages" than it does in traditionally "Christian languages," although in the Islamic world, its use is viewed as pious, whereas in the Christian world, it is primarily pejorative. In English, the word "God" either the 97th, 192nd, or 292nd most common word. In Spanish, it is the 107th most frequent; in French it is the 263rd or the 342nd most common. In Rumanian, it is the 495th, in Russian the 593rd, and in Italian the 1610th. In Latin, the word for *God* appears 31.90 times per 10,000 while in Greek it appears 22.29 times per 10,000. We expected that the word *God* would be found more frequently in the traditional languages of Roman Catholicism like Italian, French, Rumanian and Spanish. The high frequency of the word *Dios* in Spanish came as no

surprise. However, the relatively low frequency of the word God in Rumanian and especially Italian, the home of the Vatican and the bastion of the Roman Catholic Church, certainly did. For one reason or another, Allah expressions have not spread to a great extent beyond Arabic into the other traditional languages of Islam. The question is why?

10. Linguistic and Socio-Cultural Limitations of the Allah Lexicon:

The length and time a people have been Muslim clearly has no impact on the extent of the Allah Lexicon in a given language. This may be the result of certain socio-cultural or linguistic limitations that play a role in curtailing its spread. Languages, as we know, are reflections of the people who speak them. They are mirrors of mentalities and culturally based constructions. According to Louis Massignon, Semitic languages reflect a monotheistic mindset, whereas Indo-European languages reflect a polytheistic one.⁴⁴ He explains:

The limited truth, unduly characterized by the theory of Aryan superiority, is that the general grammatical characteristics (vocabulary, morphology, syntax) of our Indo-European languages determine that when an idea is expressed in them, its outer form will differ entirely from its clothing in a Semitic language. The idea's Aryan presentation, the only one familiar to Western Orientalists, is periphrastic, made of words with unstable, shaded contours and changeable endings, words fit for apposition and combination. Very early on, verbal tenses in these languages become relative to the agent, egocentric, polytheistic; the words also have a didactic order, and are arranged in long hierarchical periods by means of graduated conjunctions. The Semitic presentation of the idea is gnomic, employing rigid words with immutable and always noticeable roots. The few changes allowed are internal and abstract: consonants are interpolated for the general meaning, vowels altered for the precise shade. The conjunctive role of particles is inseparable from the vocalic changes in endings; verbal tenses, even today, are absolute (they concern only the action) and theocentric (they affirm the transcendence and imminence of the One Agent); and finally, word order is lyrical, with phrases parceled into staccato formulas, condensed and autonomous. Whence the misunderstanding of those who, unable to perceive the powerful, explosive concision of Semitic languages, pronounce them unfit for mysticism.

⁴⁴ Editor's Note: As Benjamin Clark explains, Massignon "thought that Persian, like all of its Indo-European cousins, including French, was an idolatrous language, friendlier than Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic to paganism and the vanity of esthetes" (Massignon xxvii).

They are, after all, the languages of revelation of the transcendent God, of the Prophets, and of the Psalms. (47-48)

This view of the innate monotheism of Semitic languages is also expressed by Jean Grosjean in his “Preface” to Denise Masson’s French translation of the Holy Qur’an:

Le lecteur français doit toutefois se rappeler que, voilées par nos langues indo-européennes, les notions sur lesquelles se fonde tout monothéisme sont évidentes dans les langues sémites. Par exemple, le verbe y exprime plus le mode que le temps. Ses formes indiquent avec naturel si l’acte non seulement est subi ou se réfléchit mais encore son intensité, son intention, son effet ou sa cause, sa réciprocité, etc. Au contraire, nos précisions de temps sont secondaires et ne s’obtiennent que par des moyens accessoires. Les deux seuls temps réels ne font que distinguer entre ce qui est achevé, certain, et ce qui ne l’est pas, sans préjuger l’époque, au point qu’une action future peut être déjà faite. (iii-iv)

[The French reader will recall that, while we are veiled by our Indo-European languages, the basic notions of monotheism are evident in Semitic languages. For example, the verb expresses more the mood than the tense. Its forms indicate naturally whether the act is not only received or reflected but also its intensity, its intention, its cause or effect, its reciprocity, etc. On the contrary, our precisions of time are secondary and are only obtained through secondary means. The two tangible tenses merely distinguish between what is completed and certain and that which is not, without indicating the period of time, to the extent that a future action may also be completed.]

As descendants of Abraham through Isaac, the Jews belong to a long tradition of monotheism. The ancient Jews were not fond of fiction, and produced little secular literature. They viewed any literature that stemmed from other than God as suspicious. They reveled in revelation, however, and produced a rich body of religious works. Just as their religion differed from the ancient religions insofar as it is founded on the idea of one God, who is infinitely just, omnipotent and omnipresent, so did their language which reflected this Abrahamic monotheism.⁴⁵

As descendants of Abraham through Ishmael, the Arabs also belong to a long tradition of monotheism. Although they strayed from the straight path, like the Jews did on many occasions, and turned to idolatry, the Arabs returned to their ancestral

⁴⁵ Editor’s Note: According to Hitti, who was Christian, Islam, in its original form, is “the logical perfection of Semitic religion” (1968: 5).

monotheism with the advent of Muhammad.⁴⁶ Since then, the Arabic language has been immersed in an ocean of Islam and the sublime sophistication of the language of the Qur'an became the standard for Arabic grammar.⁴⁷ As Islam spread among the Arabs so did new Islamic Allah-centric expressions, which have evolved and expanded over the course of the centuries.⁴⁸

While a process of Islamization occurred among non-Arabic-speaking Muslims, it does not seem to have gone far as it did among the Arabs, at least not in the area of language. Not all Muslim nations were Islamized to the same extent. Consequently, the interpretation and application of Islam manifests varying levels of cultural saturation.⁴⁹ The Amazigh or Berbers of North Africa, for example, have been Muslims almost as long as the Arabs; however, their culture has not been Islamized to the same extent as the Arabs and some Berbers continue to hold on to some pre-Islamic customs and superstitions.⁵⁰ Likewise, many Indonesian Muslims continue to mix Hindu and Buddhist

⁴⁶ Editor's Note: For more on paganism among the Jews see Nigosian's *Occultism in the Old Testament*. Some of the pre-Islamic Arabs retained their ancient monotheistic faith and were known as the *hanif* [The Rightly-Guided]. The Prophet Muhammad and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib never adored idols as they formed part of this *hanifi* tradition.

⁴⁷ Editor's Note: Almighty Allah describes the Holy Qur'an as "Arabic, pure and clear" (16: 103). As Elsayed M.H. Omran explains, "From the time of Sibawayh [765-96 CE] up to the present day there is hardly a page in any manual of Arabic grammar which does not contain one or more verses from the Qur'an." There is no doubt that "the Qur'an was instrumental in the codification of Arabic grammar in the second and the third Islamic centuries." Omran, however, fails to mention that the first Arabic grammar was dictated by Imam 'Ali to Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali (Jordac 80). As George Jordac explains, "With his perfect knowledge of syntax, [his] eloquent tongue and great power of thinking," Imam 'Ali "formulated the rules and principles of correct Arabic" (80). This is further documented in M.A. al-Husayni (119) and Sayyed Safdar Husayn's *Histoire des premiers temps de l'Islam* (427-28) which draw from Major Jarret's translation of Suyuti's (d. 1505) *Tarikh al-Khulafa'* or *History of the Caliphs* (183). As Muhammad Hamidullah explains,

Il convient toutefois de mettre en garde ceux qui connaissent l'arabe et lisent le Coran dans l'original: qu'ils n'assujettissent pas le Coran aux avis, post-eventum, de Sibawayh et d'al-Asma'i; que, bien au contraire, les grammairiens post-coraniques se soumettent à l'usage du Saint Coran (xxiv).

[It is important to warn those who know Arabic and read the Qu'ran in its original language that they should not subject it to the *post-eventum* opinions of Sibawayh and al-Asma'i, but rather, post-Qur'anic grammarians who submit to Qur'anic usage.]

⁴⁸ Editor's Note: An argument can be made that a reliance on the Allah Lexicon and its high frequency of use among Muslims aided in the spread of Islam by anchoring its focus so firmly on oral exhortation.

⁴⁹ Editor's Note: As Seyyed Hossein Nasr explains, "Wherever Islam went, it did not seek to level existing social structures to the ground, but to preserve and transform them as long as they did not oppose the spirit and form of the Islamic revelation: the result was the creation of a single Islamic identity" (2002: 88).

⁵⁰ Editor's Note: In all fairness, we must admit that even the Arabs maintain pre-Islamic customs and superstitions. The Berbers, however, are an exception in terms of language. On the basis of our interaction with Middle Atlas Berbers in Morocco, the Tamazight language appears to abound in religious

traditions with their Islamic practices.⁵¹ The same applies to many African-Americans who combine Black Nationalism and Islam, and many African blacks who practice a blend of Islam and animism.⁵² Superficial Islamization, rather than the length of time a people have been Muslim, may represent the key factor affecting the preponderance of the Allah Lexicon.⁵³

If we assume that all Muslims have been equally Muslimized, the answer to the limited spread of the Allah Lexicon to other languages may be found in the Qur'an. Recited exclusively in Arabic in ritual contexts, the Qur'an has not been readily available in translation until modern times. Even today, the vast majority of non-Arab Muslims read the Qur'an in its original Arabic, rarely understanding a word. Among the Arabs, the regular recitation of the Qur'an exposes listeners to multitude of Allah expressions which

invocations but with a preference for the word *Rabb* [Lord] as opposed to *Allah*. The preference for *Rabb* over Allah is also common among Arabic-speaking Jews and Christians. As most of the Amazigh people were Christians or Jews prior to embracing Islam, it may be that the use of "Lord" forms part of their pre-Islamic cultural, religious and linguistic legacy. In Amazigh villages in Morocco, the typical greeting made to passersby is *Allah y'awn* or "May Allah help you."

⁵¹ Editor's Note: According to Thomas J. Abernethy, "Hinduism and Buddhism color Islam in Indonesia... Indonesians wove local culture into the fabric of their new faith" (259).

⁵² Editor's Note: For the combination of Black Nationalism and Islam, one need not look any further than Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science Temple, Elijah Muhammad and Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, the 5% Nation of Islam, the Ansar Allah and other similar sects which speak for less than 1% of the 2.5 million African American Muslims. The followers of Elijah Muhammad and Louis Farrakhan are outside of the fold of Islam for, as the "Muslim Program" explains on their web site and their publications, they "believe that Allah (God) appeared in the Person of Master W. Fard Muhammad, in July 1930; the long-awaited "Messiah" of the Christians and the "Mahdi" of the Muslims." The NOI believes that Master W. Fard Muhammad was Allah and that Elijah Muhammad was his Final Messenger. This is whom they refer to when they say "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger." The belief in *hulul* [incarnation] is the antithesis of *tawhid* [oneness of God] and the belief in a prophet after Muhammad is clearly inconsistent with the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. The NOI believes in racial separation and that "intermarriage or race mixing should be prohibited" while Islam has abolished racism (49:13; 4:1; 2:213; 6:98; 7:189; 21:92; 23:52). As the Prophet said in his Farewell Sermon, "All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black nor a black has any superiority over a white - except by piety and good action" (Muslim, Ahmad, Darimi, Ibn Majah, Abu Dawud, Ibn Hibban et al.). The NOI believes "in the resurrection of the dead--not in physical resurrection--but in mental resurrection" while Islam believes in physical resurrection. The NOI believes that black people "are the people of God's choice" while Islam does not believe in Chosen People. In short, the Nation of Islam has little in common with Islam besides its name. Claude Andrew Clegg is thus in error when he claims that "[i]n regards to traditional or orthodox Islam, the Nation of Islam was heterodox in many of its views and practices; however, it was arguably a legitimate Muslim sect given its marginal adherence to central tenets of the Islamic faith." (68). He adds that "[o]verall, the basic outlines of both religious traditions do appear to overlap enough to allow the black organization to reasonably claim membership in the body of Islam, albeit as a heretical limb" (69). The Nation of Islam cannot be heterodox, a legitimate Muslim sect, a member in the body of Islam and a heretical limb at the same time. It should be noted that Warith Deen Muhammad's Muslim American Society, though originally nationalistic in nature, is Sunni in orientation and part of mainstream American Islam.

⁵³ Editor's Note: In one *hadith*, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 765-66) purportedly criticizes the superficial conversions to Islam of Sindis, Zinjis, Khuzistanis, Kurds, Berbers and Razis, all of whom share the dubious distinction of not having the sweetness of belief enter their hearts (Ibn Babawayhi 321).

are understood and integrated into daily speech. With this information in mind, it becomes clear why the vast majority of Allah expressions have not spread outside of Arabic: they were simply not understood.

Arabic speakers and Muslims in general are quite conscious of the latent function of Allah expressions like *insha' Allah*. In fact, failure to utter the phrase when speaking of future events is often accompanied by a sense of guilt and even fear of divine punishment. In the Arabic and Islamic worlds, it is widely believed that if a wish is not fulfilled, it is because the words “Allah willing” were not mentioned. Muslim children, both Arab and non-Arab, are taught from a young age to always say *insha'Allah* when speaking of future events. Allah expressions are not strictly ritualistic or formulaic.⁵⁴ They form an integral structural and cultural component of the Arabic language, a reflection and reminder of the Allah-centricity of the Arabic language and civilization. The French formula, *Je vous prie, Monsieur, de bien vouloir accepter mes salutations distinguées*, [lit. “I beg you, Sir, to accept my distinguished salutations”], the equivalent of “yours truly,” is clearly a formulaic form of politeness.⁵⁵ Years of exposure to Arabic-speaking Muslims lead us to believe that Allah expressions are often used with a comprehension of their meaning.⁵⁶ When Arabic speakers invoke Allah and bless and

⁵⁴ Editor's Note: Throughout this book, we have generally avoided the use of the term “formula”, which, in English, has a meaning that somehow diminishes the process and removes levels of sincerity and emotion. Consequently, we have opted for terms such as: “expression”, “phrase”, “pattern”, “honorific”, and so forth. As Castleton explains in regard to Allah expressions, “it would be a mistake to assume that...their use is strictly ritualistic, without form or function” (2000b 5:2). Recognizing that Allah phrases are not merely formulas, Eirlys Davies finds it preferable to recognize a continuum with expressions possessing various degrees of fixedness in between the entirely invariable and conventional and the entirely original (75). While there is truth in Nelson's claim that since they exist as formulaic chunks of discourse, “[t]he potential for varying the formulas is minimal” (417), this applies only to formulaic Allah expressions and not Allah expressions as a whole. The name Allah, it should be remembered, can be followed by virtually any Arabic verb to express a specific sense: Allah loves, Allah gives, Allah guides, Allah helps, Allah heals...leaving the speaker with a virtually inexhaustible repertoire of possibilities.

⁵⁵ Editor's Note: Allah phrases, however, are quite different. As Castleton explains,

Alhamdulillah, as a culturally appropriate response to *kayf halik* [How are you?—Egypt], *Labas* [How are you?—Morocco], *Shlonak* [How are you?—Kuwait], may appear to be as ritualistic as the phrase, “Fine thanks, and you?” offered in English to the same salute, yet *alhamdulillah* functions in dozens of other circumstances as well, many of which are also frequent episodes. (2000b 5.1)

⁵⁶ Editor's Note: Like Masliyah, we do recognize that oaths such as *wa Allah*, *wa Allahi* and *bi Allahi* also have secularized uses in everyday speech where they are utilized as dummy words, as entreating and conjuring words, as a preliminary to further speech with the sense of “well...” as well as to express emotion or surprise (1999: 97-98). Mentioning God in such circumstances is much like saying “Ah, God” in English when one is not happy about something, “God Almighty” upon surprise, and “God damn it” when one hurts oneself. In these instances, the speaker is not sincerely calling upon God. The speaker is not seriously invoking God's help or wrath. However, when an English speaking person says “God bless you” to someone who has done a great favor, the intent is evident. The same applies with Arabic. A *Wa Allahi* here

pray for people, they do so consciously as an act of piety or a religiously or culturally prescribed act of politeness.⁵⁷ Otherwise, they may remain quiet or use ordinary, non-religious expressions of politeness such as *shukran* [thank you], *'afwan* [you are welcome], *min fadlik* [please], and so forth. Since both religious and non-religious forms of politeness exist in Arabic, the use of the Allah Lexicon may be the result of a choice.⁵⁸ Religious Arabic Muslims may make a greater effort to use Allah expressions while secular Arabic Muslims may try to drop them altogether. Some religious Arabic Muslims will drop the Allah Lexicon when conversing with non-Muslims. Likewise, Christian Arabs, particularly those from Lebanon, often opt for expressions which do not have Islamic associations or implications: for example, preferring *sabah al-khayr* over *salamu 'alaykum*.⁵⁹ It is thus clear that the use of the Allah Lexicon is conscious and is more than merely ritualistic or formulaic.⁶⁰

and there may be said without consciously contemplating the Creator. Clear invocations, supplications, prayers and calls for blessings from Almighty Allah, however, call for a higher degree of consciousness. While some Allah phrases are not necessarily used for religious reasons, these secularized sayings form a small segment of the Allah Lexicon, the vast majority of which are Islamic in nature: oaths containing God's beautiful names and attributes, Qu'ranic expressions and reference to God, oaths involving the Prophet, Imams, saints and other venerated personalities, oaths and invocations involving the Qu'ran and non-scriptural oaths expressing veneration of God.

⁵⁷ Editor's Note: Davies claims that "it is not necessarily the case that any Moroccan who uses the formula *Allah y'awn* has its religious significance uppermost in mind, any more than English speakers are likely to be conscious of the originally religious reference in 'goodbye' every time they utter it" (81). Although the religious significance of the expression may not be uppermost in mind, it still remains in mind as its Islamic nature is explicit. This cannot be said of the English "Goodbye" as few English-speakers are even aware that it is an abbreviation of "God be with you", just like the Spanish *Adiós* is a contraction of *Anda con Dios* or "Go with God." Most Muslims, regardless of how religious or learned they are, can identify the main expressions from the Allah Lexicon as being derived from the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah. Whether they mean it or not, whether they are consciously thinking about it or not, whether they are sincere or not, is really not the issue. The issue is that they use these expressions because they are religiously required forms of courtesy. They are Muslims in the literal sense of submitting to God and in the linguistic sense of submitting to the Islamic dictates governing their language. This view is in accord with the most widely recognized Arabic dictionaries: *Lisan al-'arab*, *Muhit al-muhit* and *al-Mu'jam al-wasit*, which define complimenting as treating someone with courtesy but not necessarily with sincerity.

⁵⁸ Editor's Note: As Davies explains, "[f]ormulas may be restricted with regard to the kind of speaker who may use them, the kind of addressee to whom they may be used, the medium [speech or writing] through which they may be expressed, and various aspects of the setting in which they are used" (84).

⁵⁹ Editor's Note: Christian Arabs do swear by Allah and His Properties, but not necessarily by His Most Beautiful Names, most often preferring to use *al-Rabb*, the Lord ('Abd el-Jawad, 2000: 228)

⁶⁰ Editor's Note: To demonstrate our point, it is worthwhile to translate a brief encounter we observed between an Iraqi woman and a Moroccan woman at a Wal-Mart in Kansas City on February 15, 2004, and which is reflective and representative of ordinary Arabic speech which is so saturated with invocations to God, prayers, and blessings:

Moroccan:	May Peace be upon you!
Iraqi:	May the peace, blessings and mercy of Allah be upon you!
Moroccan:	How are you?
Iraqi:	I am well, praise be to Allah. And how are you?

Due to the profound Islamic influence on the Arabic people and their language, Allah expressions integrate easily into the language. They are so common that they are even used by non-Muslim Arabic speakers, be they Jewish or Christian. While *Allah yu'tik al-sihhah* [May Allah give you health!] may come naturally in Arabic, it is not quite as easy to integrate it into other languages.⁶¹ As Castleton has noted, such phrases reflect an insignificant cultural component and have little extended social meaning within the context of English-speaking traditions (2000a). As El-Sayed has pointed out, “whatever the quantity, the frequency, or the degree of fixedness of formulas in a pair of languages, we are likely to find instances where a fixed formula in one language is not readily paired with any corresponding formula in the other” (1990: 5). In other words, in many traditionally non-Islamic languages, there are simply no equivalent expressions.⁶² As Castleton explains:

Familiar English interjections such as “By God” and “Great God, Almighty,” although identical lexically to their Arabic partners in the *Allah* Lexicon--*wa Allah* [By Allah], and *Allahu Akbar* [Allah is the Greatest]--nevertheless do not constitute, in English, authentic components of what Wardhaugh calls “a speech

Moroccan:	Praise to Allah!
Iraqi:	Is this your son?
Moroccan:	Yes, praise and thanks be to Allah
Iraqi:	There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. May Allah shower blessings on Muhammad! Please be our guests.
Moroccan:	May Allah bless you but we are pressed for time.
Iraqi:	And may Allah bless you as well.
Moroccan:	Go in peace.
Iraqi:	May Allah give you peace.

⁶¹ Editor's Note: Religious reasons aside, the form of the Arabic language may play a part in the frequency of formulaic exchanges (Coulmas 11). By the same token, “it may be that the ubiquitous root-echo response in Arabic is facilitated by the morphological structure of the language, specifically the ease with which verbs and nouns are derived by means of lexical roots” (Emery 197). It should also be recalled that Arabic literature, both ancient and modern, makes frequent use of the semantic device of “tracing”, a literary reliance on repetition for the purpose of dramatic interest, typically applying to facts, actions, songs and words which form a leitmotif (Aspel 187). The frequent use of Qu'ranic verses in the Allah Lexicon may also be attributable to the fact that they are concise and emphasize moral rules and precepts, acting much the same way as proverbs do as models of thrift. In fact, many Arab proverbs invoke Allah and are thus part and parcel of the Allah Lexicon.

⁶² Editor's Note: It is conceivable that a politeness expression from the Arabic Allah Lexicon may supplant or alter a pre-Islamic politeness phrase from another language. For example, there are many cases of expressions which are a mixture of the Arabic Allah Lexicon with other languages, such as *Khuda Hafiz*, with *Khuda*, God, in Persian, and *Hafiz*, the Protector and the Preserver in Arabic; and other similar cases in Malaysian and Fulani. Where politeness expressions existed, the Allah Lexicon may have modified them. However, not all languages have politeness expressions. This may account for the relatively low frequency of Allah expressions in East Indian languages which have few, if any, indigenous expressions of courtesy, and the ones they have, like *shukriya*, are borrowed from Arabic. This is not to mean that East Indians are rude, although they are sometimes perceived as such by Westerners. They are actually very kind and hospitable people concerned with sincerity. In Pakistan, for example, people do not say “thanks” for trivial matters. They thank people when they have gone out of their way to do something.

repertoire,” a group of words and phrases of compelling importance to verbal and written discourse within a particular speech community (124). He expands on this concept by clarifying that a linguistic repertoire represents lexical choices which speakers use to connect themselves with their community, often in very subtle ways. The English expressions above may well be used by native English speakers as exclamation or comment but there is nothing in the literature which suggests that their use assists the speaker to bond more tightly with their chosen group. (2000a)

As a result of some or all of these factors, Muslim minorities in the West, converts or immigrants, are hesitant and reluctant to say *Allah* in its original Arabic and may opt for an equivalent in Western languages. As a result, *Allah* is lost in translation. Arabic speakers who are accustomed to Allah expressions often make a conscious effort to drop them, or merely whisper them or mention them in their mind, when speaking other languages.⁶³ This is code repression as opposed to code switching and contributes to loss of culture, faith and identity.⁶⁴

11. Conclusions

In the previous pages we have examined the degree of frequency of the word Allah in the Arabic language with a particular focus on expressions and invocations. We have seen that the Arabic language has the unique honor of being the only language in the world where the word *Allah* or “God” is the most frequently occurring content word in its lexicon. We have seen that the Arabic language is saturated with a rich variety of expressions invoking Allah explicitly or implicitly and that the name *Allah* permeates both spoken and written Arabic to the point where we can speak of the omnipresence of Allah in the Arabic language. As a result, an Arabic speaker could scarcely conceive of a conversation where the name of God would not appear. Surely, there are few situations that do not encourage or require the use of the Allah Lexicon as it forms a fundamental, natural and essential aspect of the Arabic language, binding identity and culture to

⁶³ Editor’s Note: The suppression of the Allah Lexicon has been documented by Castleton (2000b 5:3).

⁶⁴ Editor’s Note: See Castleton’s “Arabic and the Allah Lexicon: The Loss of Culture in Second Language Acquisition” (2000c). El-Sayed has also pointed out this problem and concludes that “the poor performance of Arab learners in rendering correct politeness formulas warrants the need for such functions [as expressing politeness] to be introduced into curricula of English as a foreign language” (21). He also feels that Arabic speakers who study English should not be expected to accept English formulas as they are and that EFL/ESL teachers “should empirically validate a set of English formulas that are not ethnocentric and that Arab learners can manage and accept” (13). As he explains, “There is indeed no reason why anyone, because he speaks English, should not follow his own cultural traditions. It would be a very limited view to expect the foreigner [in our case the Arab learner] to forget his identity the moment he speaks English” (13).

language and religion.⁶⁵ We have observed that the Allah Lexicon exists to a much lesser degree among non-Arabic-speaking Muslims, and that the length of time a people have been Muslim bears no relation to the frequency of Allah expressions in their language. We have demonstrated that the word *Allah* has the highest functional yield in the Arabic language and is not nearly as prevalent in the other languages of Islam. The great Nicaraguan writer, Rubén Darío, was certainly right when he described Arabic Muslims as “las razas más creyentes del orbe” (OC 3: 956) [“the most believing races on earth”].⁶⁶ Arabic is truly the language of Islam, the language of the Qur’an and the language of Allah.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Editor’s Note: As a result, “language learners should be exposed to oaths for them to develop their global sociopragmatic competence in the target language” (Salih and ‘Abdul-Fattah 113).

⁶⁶ Editor’s Note: The Arabs belong to a language family, not a single race. They are made up of a multitude of different races and are united by language, culture and history. They are heterogeneous not homogeneous. As Clovis Maqsd explains, “An Arab is the one whose ‘destiny’ is either by force of circumstances or intentionally bound to the Arab world as a whole... whoever is descended from Kurdish, Negro or Armenian stock but has inhabited an Arab country, becomes an Arab by force of circumstances and by reason of the free association of his own destiny with that of the Arab world” (qtd. in Laffin 27). According to H.A.R. Gibb, “All those are Arabs for whom the central fact of history is the mission of Muhammad and the memory of the Arab empire and who in addition cherish the Arabic tongue and its cultural heritage as their common possession” (Laffin 27). One of the reasons that Arabic was so readily adopted by non-Arabic-speaking people like the Amazigh was that it was viewed as a religious language, carrier of civilization and science, as opposed to the language of a given race. As Algerian President Chadli recognized, “la langue arabe a acquis un contenu dénué de toute oppression de nature raciale” (qtd. Balta 133) [“the content of the Arabic language is devoid of racism”].

⁶⁷ Editor’s Note: As Castleton explains, “[t]hose who are directly connected to Arabic have absorbed a repertoire of divine sentiment into their daily speech, assigning *Allah* influence over every area of their lives” (2000b).

Chapter 10

The Origin of the Allah Lexicon

1. Introduction

With the advent of Islam in the seventh century, the Arabic language and culture underwent a radical and revolutionary transformation. By the end of Muhammad's prophethood in 632 C.A., every tribe in the Arabian Peninsula had rejected polytheism, embraced monotheism, accepted the *shari'ah*, an all-embracing socio-political, legal, religious, economic and spiritual order, and placed the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, at the core of the community of believers. The Qur'an, "whose genuineness is above suspicion" (Nicholson 143), became the basis of religion, law, jurisprudence, education and language and acted like a divine filter, accepting what was in accord with Islam from Arab culture and rejecting what was not. Being the first book ever published in the Arabic language, the Qur'an established the standard of classical Arabic, the guide to good grammar, the path of eloquence, the source of style and the lifeblood of the lexicon, exercising "a unique influence on the history of the Arabic language and literature" (Nicholson xxiii). A linguistic document of incomparable importance, "[i]t was viewed as a source of grammatical and lexicographical information," "[i]ts stylistic inimitability notwithstanding, it even came to be treated as a standard for theories of literary criticism" (Rosenthal 321). As a literary monument, "the Koran...stands by itself, a production unique in Arabic literature, having neither forerunners nor successors in its own idiom" (Gibb 36). Unsurpassed in its rhetorical richness, even non-Muslim Orientalists have described the Qur'an as miraculous. Hottinger admits that when "[c]onsidered from the point of view of its Arabic eloquence, the Koran is indeed a miracle" (24). Louis Massignon's acknowledgment that the Qur'an is not the work of Muhammad, single-handedly disavowed centuries of Western scholarship aimed at undermining the origin of this divine *diwan*.⁶⁸ In light of its lavish lyricism, the prowess of its poetic prose, the rhapsody of its rhythm, the multiplicity of meanings it manifests, its imposing impact on society, scholarship and science, in every respect, "there is...no single book that is as influential in any religion as the Qur'an is in Islam" (Nasr 23). Thanks to the Qur'an, the success of Muhammad's mission, and the spread of Islam under the "Orthodox" Caliphs, the Arabic language became the sacred language of the entire Muslim world. "Due to this

⁶⁸ Editor's Note: We use *diwan* here in the sense of a collection of Arabic poems. Although Qu'ran is not traditionally considered as poetry, as this might imply human authorship, it can perhaps be perceived as divine poetry.

single book,” explains Wilson Bishai, “Arabic rose from almost complete insignificance to be the holy tongue of the second largest religious community in the world” (92). As a result, “in many countries in Africa, Southeast Asia, as well as the Middle East, the chantings of the Qur’an in Arabic are heard daily in homes, over loudspeakers and in official gatherings--a clear evidence of the profound impression this single book from Arabia has left upon millions of the world’s inhabitants” (92). The language of the Qur’an is held in such high regard that many Muslims call it *lughat Allah*, the language of Allah.⁶⁹ In the Holy Qur’an, Allah reveals that the Qur’an existed prior to creation in the form of a Guarded Tablet (85: 21-22). In the Sunnah, the Tradition of the Prophet, Muhammad says that “Allah recited Surat al-Tawbah [The Repentence] and Surat Ya-Sin [Mystic Letters Y.S.] one thousand years before creation” (Ghazali). According to French Orientalist Jacques Berque, “[t]he Arabic language scarcely belongs to the world of men; rather, it seems to be lent to them” (190). As a holy language, directly dispensing God’s word and law, this classical language is invested with supplementary levels and layers of implicature not always evident to the outside observer. While Greek and Latin were infused with a new vocabulary as a result of the rise of Christianity, the saturation of spirituality into the Arabic language, which took place, via the Qur’an and the Sunnah, with the arrival of Islam, may be unparalleled in human and linguistic history.

2. The Holy Qur’an

The religion of Islam strongly recommends the recitation of the Qur’an with assurances of rich rewards for remembrance of its Revealer. The very first word of the Qur’anic revelation is the imperative *Iqra’*: “Read!” “Recite!” and “Proclaim!” the word of Allah (96:1). Almighty Allah asks Muhammad and the Muslims to believe in the Qur’an (6:92), to “Listen to it with attention, and hold your peace: that you may receive mercy” (7:204), to “recite the Qur’an in slow, measured, rhythmic tones” (73:4), to “move not thy tongue concerning the [Qur’an] to make haste therewith” (75:16), to “earnestly seek to understand the Qur’an” (47:24), to “study it as it should be studied” (2:121) as it is easy to understand and to remember (19:97; 44:58; 54:17, 22, 32 and 40).

The Prophet Muhammad encouraged Muslims to read, recite and memorize the Qur’an. He said that “Reciting the Qur’an is the best form of worship” (Ghazali); “The Qur’an is the best of intercessors, superior to prophets and angels...” (Ghazali); “He who recites the Qur’an belongs to the family of Allah and His sincere servant” (Ghazali); “The

⁶⁹ Editor’s Note: The fact that many Muslims, Arabs and non-Arabs, believe that Arabic is Allah’s language can easily be ascertained by googling “language of Allah.”

best of you is the one who learns the Qur'an and teaches it" (Bukhari, Ghazali); "Do not envy but ... a man to whom Allah has granted the Qur'an and who recites it in prayer day and night" (Bukhari and Muslim); and "Recite the Qur'an until it prevents you from evil" (Ghazali). When asked how people can purify their hearts, the Prophet told them to remember death and to recite the Qur'an (Bayhaqi). Besides reciting parts of it every day during the five ritual prayers, devout Muslims read the Qur'an regularly as an act of personal piety as well as for special occasions. All Muslims, both Arab and non-Arab, are encouraged to study classical Arabic as it is the language of the Qur'an, the scholarly language of Islam, and the *lingua franca* of the Muslim world. As Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 765-66) explained: "Acquire knowledge of Arabic for the final word of Allah has been revealed in it" (qtd. in Pooya Yazdi 765).

While the Bible may indeed be the best selling book of all times, few Christians read it regularly and scarce are those who, even among priests and ministers, have read it completely, from cover to cover.⁷⁰ Among Muslims, though, memorization and recitation of parts of the Qur'an are required in order to complete the five daily prayers. Furthermore, the complete recitation of the Qur'an serves as a rite of passage for Muslim children. As such, the sacred scripture of the Muslim faith is the most read book in the world. Having been raised with its recitation, "[t]he Book, a breviary of maxims, prayers and stories will forever supply the adult with a tribunal to which he can submit his experience of the world" (Berque 191). As Laffin points out, "[t]he influence of the Koran cannot be over-emphasized. It is known to the least educated people and even to illiterates because it has for centuries been the main text in the village schools, and in weekly 'sermons' in the mosque" (44). If we consider that the most common noun in the Qur'an is *Allah*, and that the Qur'an is the sourcebook of divine attributes and expressions, with every mention of the Deity becoming a possible formula--Allah loves, Allah guides, Allah is Merciful, and so forth--we can imagine the central role its regular reading and recitation over the past 14 centuries has played in the diffusion of the Allah

⁷⁰ Editor's Note: According to research conducted by the Bible Resource Center, about one in five (18%) Christians report they never read the Bible. About as many (23%) read the Bible at least once a day. The median response is two or three times a month. Older adults were more likely to read the Bible and read it at least once a day. These numbers increase somewhat among Church-going Christians. According to William Proctor, some surveys indicate that 20 to 25% of Americans have read through the entire Bible, a figure he believes to be high. When asked how many have read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, the response is less than 10% (<http://www.missoulia.com/specials/faith/messil.php>).

Lexicon.⁷¹

3. The Sayings and the Sunnah⁷²

While the Holy Qur'an played a seminal role in the spread of the Allah Lexicon, the Sayings and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad helped to solidify and disseminate it within the Arabic language and culture. These traditions, both prophetic and divine,⁷³ are divided into general and specific sayings, all of which came to supplant the pre-Islamic sayings.

3.1 Pre-Islamic Pagan Sayings

Pre-Islamic Arabs had many greetings and expressions, some related to religion and some not. According to 'Imran b. Husayn, a Companion of the Prophet, the Arabs in the pre-Islamic period used to say "May Allah make the eye happy for you" and "Good morning" but when Islam came the Muslims were forbidden from saying that (Abu Dawud). "May Allah make the eye happy for you" is demonstrably an Allah expression and is one of the few pre-Islamic expressions which invoke the name of Allah, who was already considered the Supreme Being among the Arab polytheists, much as Brahma was among the Hindus. The prohibition of this phrase, despite its use of the name of Allah, expresses a deliberate attempt on the part of the Prophet to purge the Arabic language of

⁷¹ Editor's Note: Along with the Holy Qur'an, the prophetic traditions and Islamic literature in general have played important roles in the diffusion of the Allah Lexicon. One particularly rich source of Allah expressions is to be found in Islamic books for children, where all the basic formulas are taught, as this forms a fundamental part of early childhood education in Muslim society. As El-Sayed explains,

Children are...trained to use correct forms of thanking especially those used before beginning a meal and finishing it. As Muslims, Egyptian parents train their children on the correct forms of, for instance, *bismillah* (in the name of God) [a form uttered before beginning a meal] and *alhamdulillah* (praise be to God) [a form uttered after finishing a meal.] (19-20).

⁷² Editor's Note: As this is a socio-linguistic study, the authenticity of the *ahadith* cited in this study is of little importance. Whether the traditions are *sahih* [authentic], *hasan* [good], *da'if* [weak], *mutawatir* [constant], *mashhur* [well-known], *gharib* [strange] or even *mawdu'* [spurious], they have circulated for over 14 centuries, through the oral and literary traditions, and have contributed to the diffusion of the Allah Lexicon. Overall, the traditions cited here are *sahih* and we have followed the principle that what is in accord with the Qur'an is acceptable and what is contrary to the Qur'an is to be rejected. As the Father of *Fiqh*, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 765-66) said: "Whatsoever is reported about us, if it is possible for one of mankind and you do not understand or comprehend it, do not deny it, but you can attribute it to us. However, if it is impossible for anyone of mankind, then deny it, and do not attribute it to us" (qtd. al-Muzaffar 38). When citing *ahadith*, we have followed the common convention of identifying the collection (Bukhari, Muslim, etc.) and not the specific page. As the books of *ahadith* are systematically organized and well-indexed, it requires little effort to look up the traditions in question, particularly with online collections like *al-Muhaddith*, CD ROMs, and a concordance like Wensick's. While Ghazali's (d. 1111) *Ihya' 'ulum al-din* is not a book of traditions *per se*, its thematic arrangement allows easy location of relevant traditions. We have relied primarily on Sunni books of *hadith* for this study; however, the majority of *ahadith* cited are also found in Shi'ite sources.

⁷³ Editors's Note: *Ahadith* are divided into two categories: 1) *nabawi* or prophetic, which record the words of Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, and *qudsi* or sacred, in which the Prophet conveys revelations which did not form part of the Qur'an. The prophetic traditions commence with the words "The Messenger of Allah said", while the divine traditions start with "The Messenger of Allah said that Allah said."

pre-Islamic greetings and expressions and to replace them with a new, entirely Islamic, corpus. While the Prophet was successful in eradicating the expression “May Allah make the eye happy for you,” it has partially survived or resurfaced in the Levantine expression *Ya ‘ayni*, “O [light of] my eyes.” As for Muhammad’s prohibition of “Good morning” or *sabah al-khayr*, it appears to have been temporary in nature, no longer applicable after the almost universal acceptance of Islam among the Arabs, and meant merely as a means of differentiating the Muslim Arabs from the pagan Arabs.⁷⁴

The greeting of peace, also used among Jews in the form of *shalom aleichem*, was introduced among the Arab Muslims as *al-salamu ‘alaykum*. It succeeded in supplanting the pre-Islamic greeting “May Allah make your eye happy” but did not successfully replace *sabah al-khayr* or “good morning” which was described by Ibn Ishaq (d. 768) as “the greeting of paganism” (319). In fact, on one occasion ‘Umayr approached the Prophet and said “Good morning.” The Prophet replied that “Allah has honored us with a better greeting than thine... It is *salam*, the greeting of the inhabitants of paradise” (319) to which ‘Umayr responded “By Allah, Muhammad, you have taken to it only recently” (319) an indication that the *salam* greeting was novel, entirely Islamic, and started by the Prophet, following the Qur’anic commands “When those come to thee who believe in Our Signs, say: ‘peace be on you’” (6:54), “When a greeting is offered you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous, [at least] of equal courtesy” (4:86); and “If ye enter houses, salute each other—a greeting of blessing and purity from Allah” (24:61). The minimum required response to *al-salamu ‘alaykum* is *wa ‘alaykum al-salam*, “and peace be upon you,” as “[t]his is a kind of precise Islamic form” (El-Sayed 19).

On another occasion, Kaladah bin Hanbal visited the Prophet and neither greeted him nor sought permission to enter. Upon this, the Prophet said: “Go back and say ‘*al-salamu ‘alaykum*; may I enter?’” (Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud). The Prophet repeatedly reinforced the *salam* salutation with such sayings as “[The best part of Islam is] to provide food and say *salam*” (Bukhari); “Indeed the nearest of people to Allah are those who begin with *salam*” (Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, Ahmad); “When one of you meets his brother, he should say *salam* to him” (Abu Dawud); “The young should say *salam* to the old, the passer-by to the one sitting, and the small [group] to the large one” (Bukhari); “When one of you arrives where people are seated, he should say *salam* to them. And

⁷⁴ Editor’s Note: This could equally apply to decrees determined to distinguish the Muslim minority from their adversaries, such as “Oppose the polytheists. Let the beards grow long and shave the moustaches” (Bukhari and Muslim); and “He who imitates a people [other than the Muslims] is of them” (Ahmad), among others.

when he wishes to leave, he should say *salam* to them” (Abu Dawud); “When you enter to where your family is, say *salam*. It is a blessing on you and on the people of your house” (Tirmidhi); “When you enter a house, say *salam* to its inhabitants, and when you go out, leave its inhabitants by saying *salam*” (Bayhaqi); and “Saying *salam* comes before talking” (Tirmidhi). When asked for a definition of the straight path, the Prophet responded that it was saying “Peace be upon you” (Bukhari and Muslim) and said that saying *salam* when greeting people was an attribute of a believer (Bukhari and Muslim) and that “The nearest people to Allah are those who are the first in sending their *salam*” (Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, and Ahmad).

During the pre-Islamic period, the Arabs used to swear by Allah, their pagan gods, the Black Stone which is housed in the Ka‘bah, and the names of their parents. The pre-Islamic oaths to Allah, some of which have long disappeared, included: *yaminu Allah* [I swear by Allah]; its plural form *aymanu Allahi*; its variants *[ay]manul* *[ay]minul* *[ay]munu* or shortened forms *a[y]mul* *a[y]mil* *a[y]ma*; or the shortest forms *mu/ma/mi*; as well as *haramu Allahi* [By the Sacredness of Allah]; *‘amra Allahi*, *‘amraka Allah* or *la ‘amru Allahi* [By the Life/Age of Allah] and *wa-hajjati Allahi* [By the Pilgrimage to Allah] (Masliyah 87). The most common oaths to pagan gods included: *Wa al-Lat*, *Wa al-‘Uzza*, *Wa Manat* [By al-Lat!, By al-‘Uzza’!, By Manat!]. However, “even for deities, or God, there is hardly a place” in pre-Islamic poetry where oaths are merely used to show the determination and inflexibility of the poet’s ego” (Hottinger 22). In fact, “[a]mong the pagan Arabs the use of oaths became so common that it almost ceased to have any solemn meaning” (‘Ali 1784). In other words, such oaths were more rhetorical than strictly religious. Swearing by the names of family members was frequent, the most common of which included: *wa ummi*, *wa abi*, *wa jaddi* [By my mother!, By my father!, By my grandfather!].

Clearly, these common pre-Islamic conventions could not continue under Islam and needed to be cast away, resulting in the following prophetic decrees: “Do not swear by your fathers or by your mothers or by rivals to Allah, and swear by Allah only, and swear by Allah only when you are speaking the truth” (Abu Dawud); “Allah forbids you to swear by your forefathers. If one of you swears, he must swear by Allah or keep silence” (Bukhari, Muslim and Abu Dawud); “Do not swear by your fathers” (Bukhari); “He who swears by his honor [*amanah*] is not of our numbers” (Malik); “It is detested to swear by other than Allah’s names and attributes, whether by the Prophet, the Ka‘bah, the angels, the protection [of Allah], one’s life, or soul...the most detested of all is swearing

by the *amanah* [of Allah]" (Nawawi); "If anyone swears by a religion other than Islam falsely, he is like what he said" (Bukhari and Malik); "Do not swear by your fathers; and whoever wants to swear should swear by Allah" (Bukhari); "Whoever swears saying in his oath 'By Lat and al-'Uzza' should say 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah'" (Bukhari); and clearly, the most categorical of all, "He who swears by anyone but Allah is a polytheist" (Abu Dawud). The ancient oaths to Allah and heathen deities were replaced with *wa Allah* by itself or followed by an appropriate attribute, such as *wa Allahi al-'Azim*, "By Allah, the Great," applicable to the particular circumstance. Rather than diminishing human beings, the new Islamic oaths elevated God, reinforcing the concept of Allah as Supreme, as the focus of all life and activity.

With a few exceptions, pagan invocations disappeared from the Arabic language when the monotheistic mind-set dominated, bringing to an end what some have described as a fragmented, disorderly worldview composed of arbitrary polytheistic powers.⁷⁵ Swearing in the name of family members, however, has not ended, and it continues to be common cultural practice despite prophetic prohibition. Despite being forbidden [*haram*] or strongly discouraged [*karahatan shadidah*] to swear by *amanah*, it is common in Iraq and the Middle East to swear by *amanat Allah*. In Baghdad, people often swear by *amanat Allah*, [Allah's Honor], *wa Allah wa amanatuhu*, [By Allah and His Honor], and *amanat Allah wa Rasuluh* [By Allah's Honor and His Messenger's] (Masliyah 86).

While "[t]he spiritual bases of the pagan beliefs and of the new religion, Islam, diverge widely" they had "one bond...in common--the Arabic language. In both eras, the Arabic language was the creative nucleus around which and from which these two opposed spiritual ideologies grew" (Hottinger 25). It is quite evident that the ocean of

⁷⁵ Editor's Note: *The Pipes of Pan at Jajouka*, a field recording made in Morocco by Brian Jones and Brion Gysin in 1968, captures what seems to be ancient Lupercalia rituals dedicated to the god Pan, known as Bou Jeloud, the Father of Skins, that are hours and sometimes days, long, in the village of Jajouka in the Rif mountains near Tangiers. Performed by the Ahl Serif tribe, the Rites of Pan were long kept secret under their ragged cloak of Islam. Nowadays, however, the Master Musicians of Jajouka travel the world performing their fusion of pagan trance music, theatre and dance (Fuson). The festival includes evocations to Bou Jaloud or Pan, the goat god, as well as the female jinn known as Aisha Qandisha. Although of Arabic origin, the name may have supplanted the early names of Aishim, the angels of fertility, Astarte, the goddess of sexuality, Esha, the feminine element of cosmic fire, or Asherat, goddess of life. The last name Qandisha or Qadisha may be derived from the Hebrew *qadesh*, meaning holy, which applied to temple harlots, prostitutes and sodomites. The name may also be linked to the following heathen deities: Qodsha, Kadesh or Qadesh, the holy one, the mistress of the gods, the divine force of sexuality; Kether, the most ancient holy one, the Akkadian Qadishtu, the holy women, dedicated to the service of the goddess Ishtar, the great whore, through sexual service to men. For more on the ancient origin of the name Aisha Qadisha, refer to *In a Chariot Drawn by Lions* by Asphodel P. Long, *The Cipher of Genesis* by Carlo Suarés, *The Book of Goddesses and Heroines* by Patricia Monaghan, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* by Agrippa, *When God was a Woman* by Merlin Stone, *The Metaphysics of Sex* by Julius Evola, and Barbara Walker's *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*.

Allah expressions in the Arabic language grew as the result of the rejection of polytheism and as a perpetual reminder and reinforcement of Muhammad's monotheistic mandate. It would appear that pre-Islamic Arabic was peppered with aphoristic, proverbial, and idiomatic expressions for every occasion and that, when those became *haram*, a void was created for which the Allah Lexicon supplied filler.

A relevant side-note to the intense focus on Allah during the period of transition between pre-Islamic times and the advent of Islam concerns the issue of declaration, that is, a declaration of faith in the face of dangerous opposition. While Islam tolerates and even prescribes *taqiyyah*, the dissimulation of one's faith, in times of fear, false conversions to Islam, on the other hand, are condemned.⁷⁶ As Alfred Guillaume explains, "Muslims look with a tolerant eye on a man who conceals his belief through *force majeure*, but to pretend to be a Muslim is a crime" (242). "The hypocrites," however, "will be in the lowest depths of the Fire; no helper wilt thou find for them" (4:145). The Qur'anic condemnation of hypocrites (2:8-20; 2:204-206; 3:167-168; 4:60-63; 4:70-73; 4:88-89; 4:141-143; 4:145; 9:64-65; 9:67-69; 58:14-19; 59:11-14) may motivate Muslims to assert their Islamicity through verbal expressions of faith.⁷⁷

3.2 General Sayings

The general sayings encourage, in broad terms, the remembrance of Allah at all times and places, inwardly and outwardly, mentally and verbally, implicitly and explicitly.⁷⁸ In Muslim, it is related that the Prophet said that: "Whenever people sit and remember Allah, the angels surround them, mercy covers them, tranquility descends upon them, and Allah makes mention of them to His Company [of angels]." In Muslim (d. 875) and Bukhari (d. 870), he states that: "He who remembers Allah, and he who does not, are

⁷⁶ Editor's Note: According to the Qur'an, "Anyone who after accepting faith in Allah utters unbelief--except under compulsion, his heart remaining in faith--but as such as open their breast to unbelief,--on them is the wrath from Allah, and theirs will be a dreadful penalty" (16:106). The hiding of one's faith due to fear is also permitted in 40:28 and 28:20. Due to persecution, the very survival of Shi'ism depended upon *taqiyyah*, reaching a point where Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 765-66) said that: "He who has no *taqiyyah* has no faith" (Amali). *Taqiyyah*, of course, is an Islamic practice, and not solely a Shi'ite one, and was widespread among the Spanish Muslims after the fall of Granada in 1492 who outwardly accepted the official religion while practicing their own faith in secret.

⁷⁷ Editor's Note: In psychological terms, this could be a case of over-compensating, a common characteristic of Jewish converts to Catholicism in Spain. To assert their sincerity, and to dissimulate their ethnicity, they adopted religiously-oriented family names like Cruz [Cross] and Germanic names like Guzmán. Many became priests, and some, like Juan de Torquemada, the notorious Grand Inquisitor, went to the extreme of persecuting their own people. It may be that some of the early Muslims with polytheistic pasts wanted to publicly profess their monotheistic faith.

⁷⁸ Editor's Note: The Allah Lexicon contains many cases where the name of Allah is implied. As Masliyah explains, "In many cases in Iraqi Arabic where the name of the supernatural is not mentioned in the curse, it is understood that Allah is the one referred to" (2001: 274).

like the living and the dead.” In Ahmad (d. 855), he says that the best deed is “To leave the world while your tongue is busy with the remembrance of Allah.” In the same book, he says that the best people on the Day of Judgment will be “those who remember Allah greatly.” In Bayhaqi (d. 1066), Allah’s Messenger says: “For everything there is a polish, and the polish for the hearts is the remembrance of Allah.” The remembrance of the Almighty is a source of divine love. As the Prophet explains, “He who remembers Allah much, Allah loves him,” and he said: “The night that I ascended to my Lord I passed by a man extinguished within the light of Allah’s Throne. I asked, ‘Who is this, and is he an angel?’ I was told ‘No,’ and I asked again, ‘Is it a Prophet?’ I was told ‘No,’ and I said, ‘Who then?’ It was said: ‘This is a man who, while he was in the world, his tongue was constantly mentioning Allah and his heart was attached to the mosques’” (Ghazali). Reiterating the Qur’anic verse in which Allah says “Remember me and I will remember you,” the Prophet relates that Allah told him that:

I am for my servant as he thinks of Me and I am with him when he remembers Me, so if he remembers Me in his mind I also remember him in My Mind and if he remembers Me in an assembly I also remember him in an assembly much better than this [ie. in the assembly of angels]. (Bukhari and Muslim).

He also said that “The men and women who remember Allah very much” were the best servants and the highest in rank in the eye of Allah on the Day of Judgement (Ahmad). Al-Mundhiri (d. 1258) relates in *al-Tarhib wa al-tarhib* that the Prophet said that: “The one who remembers Allah among those who forget Him, Allah shows him his seat in paradise during his life”; “The one who remembers Allah among those who forget Him is like the fighter behind those who run away”; “The one who remembers Allah among those who forget Him, Allah looks at him with a look after which He will never punish him”; “The one who remembers Allah among those who forget Him is like a light inside a dark house”; “The one who remembers Allah among those who forget Him, Allah forgives him sins to the amount of every eloquent and non-eloquent speaker,” meaning, the entire number of non-speaking animals and speaking human beings; and “The one who remembers Allah in the marketplace, will have light in every hair of his head on the Day of Resurrection.” The Prophet also said: “Remembrance of Allah is firm knowledge of one’s belief, immunity from hypocrisy, a fortress against Satan, and a guarded refuge from the fire” (Samarqandi qtd. in Haddad). And the remembrance of Allah is the best of actions, as the Prophet preached:

“Shall I not inform you of the best of your actions, the most pure in the sight of

your Master, the one which raises your ranks highest, that which is better for you than giving gold and silver [in charity], and better for you than your meeting your enemies, so that you strike their necks and they strike yours?” The companions urged, “Of course, O Messenger of Allah! [Inform us!]” He replied, “It is the remembrance of Allah.” (Abu Dawud)

In *Ihya' 'ulum al-din*, Ghazali (d. 1111) reports that the Prophet said that: “One who remembers Allah among the heedless is like a living tree in the midst of dry ones”; “One who remembers Allah is like a warrior in His path”; “If anyone wishes to enter the garden of paradise, let him remember Allah much”; “Fill your tongue with the remembrance of Allah day and night”; “The remembrance of Allah in the morning and the evening is better than fighting with a sword in the path of Allah and giving wealth in charity”; “If a party of men remember Allah for the pleasure of Allah, a heavenly messenger proclaims: ‘Your sins have been forgiven and you have been given virtues in lieu of your sins.’” According to ‘A’ishah, a wife of the Prophet, “The Messenger of Allah used to remember Allah, the Great and Majestic, at all moments” (Abu Dawud).

3.3 Specific Sayings

The specific sayings in which the Prophet prescribes formulas, expressions and invocations for the purposes of personal piety and for particular occasions are applicable in any conceivable context. These expressions include:

Allah

Islam clearly rejects the concept that God’s name should be suppressed. As a reaction to the Jewish prohibition of mentioning the name of the Almighty, the Prophet urged his followers to call upon Allah abundantly and not to be stingy. In fact, according to Islamic traditions, the absence of the Allah Lexicon is one of the signs of the latter days and impending doom. As the Messenger explained, “The Hour will not rise before ‘Allah, Allah’ is no longer said on earth” (Muslim); and through another chain, “The Hour will not rise on anyone saying: *Allah, Allah*” (Muslim). For a Muslim, the Allah Lexicon forms part of a spiritual cycle. The very first word Muslim children hear upon birth is *Allah* as the *adhan* (*azan*) and *iqamah*, the calls to prayer, are chanted to them; and for the dying, the very best of actions, according to the Prophet, is to “leave the world while reciting the name of Allah” (Ahmad). Clearly, Allah is the main mantra of Islam.

Ya Allah / O Allah

Ya Allah is one of the most common Allah expressions and is particularly

prevalent in the prayers of the Prophet, for example, his prayer: “O Allah, guard me from Your Punishment on the day when you raise up your servants” (Abu Dawud). It is also called for prior to having sex, in the formula “O Allah, ward off Satan from us and ward off Satan from what you bestow on us” (Bukhari). In Arab countries, women in labor use this phrase for strength during the worst of their pains. Clearly, calling upon Allah at such a moment is not the same as yelling out of weakness: rather, it is a demonstration of divine consciousness.

Allahumma / O Allah

Allahumma, perhaps the Arabic form of the Hebrew *Elohim*, is another form of saying “O Allah” and is an oft-utilized anaphora in Muslim prayers. There are many *ahadith* citing prayers of the Prophet commencing with *Allahumma*, including *Allahumma aslamtu nafsi ilayka* when going to bed, *Allahumma laka al-hamd*, when going to pray, and *labbayk Allahumma labbayk*, when going to *hajj*, among numerous other examples.

Wa Allah / By Allah

Wa Allah or “By Allah” is very common as an Islamic oath. Oaths made to Allah are routine in Arabic and Muslims are reassured that “Allah will not call you into account for thoughtlessness in your oaths, but for the intention in your hearts; and he is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (2:115), a Qur’anic verse interpreted by the Prophet to refer to futile oaths such as “man’s speech in his house: ‘No, by Allah’ and ‘Yes, by Allah’” (Malik).

The adhan / The Call to Prayer

The *adhan*, or the Muslim call to prayer, forms part of the Allah Lexicon, and contains some of the most common Allah expressions: *Allahu Akbar* and *la ilaha illa Allah*. It consists of the following standard phrases, with the Sunni Shi’ite variants noted in brackets:

Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar

Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest

Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah

I bear witness that there is no god but Allah

Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah

I bear witness that there is no god but Allah

Ashhadu anna Muhammadan Rasulu Allah

I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah

Ashhadu anna Muhammadan Rasulu Allah

I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah

[Ashhadu anna Amira al-Mu'minin 'Aliyyan Waliyyu Allah]

[I bear witness that the Leader of the Believers, 'Ali, is the Friend of Allah]

[Ashhadu anna Amira al-Mu'minin 'Aliyyan Hujjat Allah]

[I bear witness that the Leader of the Believers, 'Ali is the Proof of Allah]

Hayya 'ala al-salah, Hayya 'ala al-salah

Come to Prayer, Come to Prayer

Hayya 'ala al-falah, Hayya 'ala al-falah

Come to Success, Come to Success

*[Hayya 'ala khayr al-'amal, Hayya 'ala khayr al-'amal]*⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Editor's Note: According to all Shi'ite sources, Imami, Isma'ili, and Zaydi, the phrase "Come to the best of actions" was part of the original prophetic *adhan* but was suppressed by Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (d. 644) who insisted that *jihad*, and not prayer, was the best of actions (Howard 219). As Tabataba'i explains, "even though during the life of the Holy Prophet it was the practice to recite in the call to prayers, 'Hurry to the best act' [*hayya 'ala khayr al-'amal*], 'Umar ordered that it be omitted because he said it would prevent people from participating in holy war, *jihad*" (1977: 46). While most Orientalists support the "orthodox" Sunni argument on the issue, Guillaume believed that the word *falah*, which is generally rendered as "salvation" and "prosperity", must be an Arabized form of *pulhana*, divine worship, which, among Aramaic-speaking Jews and Christians, was connected to service to God. For Guillaume, the Shi'ite reference to '*amal*' must surely be a memory of the original meaning of *falah* which may have been lost over time due to a semantic shift. I.K.A. Howard has also supported the Shi'ite view on the subject in his article "The Development of the *adhan* and *iqamah*." According to Howard, "although the matter does not appear to be much discussed by non-Shi'is during the latter half of the second century and the first half of the third...there is some evidence for it belonging to the *adhan* at a much earlier period (219-20). In his recension of the *Muwatta'*, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani (d. 805) records a tradition on the authority of Malik ibn Anas (d. 795) that Ibn 'Umar sometimes used to say *hayya 'ala khayr al-'amal* after *hayya 'ala al-falah* (Howard 220). This tradition seems to have been suppressed in Yahya ibn Yahya al-Laythi's recension of the *Muwatta'* and later Sunni sources. It is only mentioned anew in Ibn Hazm's (d. 1064) *Kitab al-Muhalla* (160-61), cited al-Bayhaqi (d. 1066) and another with the fourth Imam, 'Ali ibn al-Husayn in the *isnad*. It comes as no surprise that Ibn Hazm, notorious for his anti-Shi'itism, roundly condemns these traditions as fabrications. According to objective eyes of I.K.A. Howard, however:

...the tradition quoted by al-Shaybani seems to be genuine. There appears to be no reason for its fabrication. Its *isnad* (Malik-Nafi'-Ibn 'Umar) is a standard Medinan *isnad*, but in this case used for a practice that was no longer standard. The tradition does seem to point to a formula that was included in the *adhan* at a much earlier period.

Al-Fadl bin Shadhan's (d. 873-74) argument that the formula *hayya 'ala khayr al-'amal* was in the original *adhan*, only to be suppressed by the second Caliph, may not be as polemical as it first appears. As Howard admits, "[i]t might well be the case that these words were removed from the *adhan* at some time very early in Islam, and it is not impossible that it was during 'Umar's caliphate" (220).

The insertion of *al-salatu khayrun min al-nawm* [Prayer is better than sleep] into the *adhan* of the *fajr* prayer is also subject to great debate. According to Shi'ite sources, the line was introduced by the Caliph 'Umar. Sunni traditions and sources express four views on the subject: 1) the line was part of the original *adhan*, 2) the line was introduced by Bilal and retained by the Prophet, 3) the line was introduced by a *mu'adhdhin* and retained by the Caliph 'Umar, or 4) the line was introduced by the Caliph 'Umar. The Sunni scholars who accept the authenticity of the line in question cite traditions of the Prophet and his Companions from Bukhari (d. 870), Abu Dawud (d. 817), Nasa'i (d. 915), Tirmidhi (d. 892), Daraqutni (d. 995), Ibn Khuzaymah (d. 924), and al-Bayhaqi (d. 1066). The Sunni scholars who believe the line was added cite various prophetic traditions from Imam Malik (d. 795) and Bayhaqi, as well as historical sources like

[Come to the best of actions, Come to the best of actions]

[*al-salatu khayrun mina al-nawm*]

[Prayer is better than sleep]

[*al-salatu khayrun mina al-nawm*]

Tabari's (d. 923) *Tarikh* and Abu Hilal al-Askari's *Kitab al-Awa'il*, namely, *The Book of Firsts*. Although it is a non-academic, polemical website, ansar.org contains a long list of references from Sunni sources on the subject. For a more academic overview of some of these sources, Howard's article is essential (221).

Another major innovation to the *adhan* was the practice of greeting the Caliph or *amir* in the call to prayer. According to al-Baladhuri, the formula *al-salamu 'alayka ya khalifata rasulillah* was inserted before the formula *hayya 'ala al-salah* (Howard 223). Under 'Umar, this was changed to *al-salamu 'alayka ya amir al-mu'minin*, a practice which continued through the reign of Uthman, Umayyad rule, and the early 'Abbasid period. When Imam 'Ali criticized Mu'awiyah for using the title "Leader of the Believers", he may have been responding to its innovative use in the call to prayer. While some Sunnis criticize Shi'ites for inserting 'Ali into the *adhan*, the Shi'ites have some justification for it in the corpus of *ahadith*. In fact, there are plenty of Shi'ite traditions indicating that the line "I bear witness that 'Ali is the Friend of Allah" is permissible. Even some Sunni sources state that Salman and Abu Dharr used to recite '*Aliyyan Wali Allah* in the *adhan* and that this was approved by the Prophet. This view is shared by Sunni scholars like Shaykh Abd Allah Maraghi in his book *al-Salafah fi amr al-khilafah* and Wahid al-Zaman in his book *Anwar al-lughat* (5-6) which was recently re-published in Pakistan under the name *Lughat al-hadith*.

Perhaps the strongest argument in favor of the authenticity of the Shi'ite *adhan* resides in the explication of its origins. For Sunni Muslims, the *adhan* was not the product of the Prophet. It was the result of a dream by 'Umar ibn al-Khattab and 'Abd Allah ibn Zayd. Since it was not from God or the Prophet, it had no particular sanctity. What was created by a person can easily be changed by that person. For the Shi'ites however, the introduction of the *adhan* presents an entirely supernatural picture. As Howard explains,

The Prophet on his ascension into heaven took part in the heavenly *salah*. Gabriel gave the *adhan*, the Prophet led the *salah*, and the angels and the prophets participated in it. This is followed in the next tradition in *al-Kafi* by an account of how Gabriel came down and taught the Prophet the *adhan* while 'Ali was present. The Prophet then gave 'Ali instructions to teach Bilal the *adhan*. This account neatly connects the *adhan* to the Prophet's ascension into heaven... 'Ali is then made party of the Prophet's instruction in the *adhan* and himself teaches Bilal. According to this version, the *adhan* was fixed in its complete form from the moment of its inception. 'Ali was present at the prophetic inspiration, and is a witness to its validity; but not only is he that, he is also the instructor of the first *mu'adhdhin*. Thus, 'Ali's position counters the claims being made on behalf of 'Umar. (226-27)

For the Shi'ites, the *adhan* was given by God to the Prophet via the Angel Gabriel. Since it was of divine origin, the Shi'ites were in no position to change it. In fact, the Shi'ites have been the strongest to resist any innovations in Islam, be it in *wudhu*, *salah* or the *adhan*. They have always adhered closely to the Qur'an, rejecting any traditions which contradicted it. In the case of the *adhan*

They have preserved the twofold *shahadah* at a time when the *wilayah* of 'Ali had become one of the fundamental pillars of their faith, and they include no mention of "I witness that 'Ali is the *Wali* of Allah." Some of their more enthusiastic brethren endeavored to introduce this into the *adhan*, but they were roundly denounced by Ibn Babawayh and al-Tusi. (Howard 227-28)

Another argument favoring the Shi'ite stance on the *adhan* can be found in the fact that Bilal ibn Rabah (d. 642), the Prophet's *mu'adhdhin*, refused to make the call to prayer during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman. Although Bilal's refusal to call the *adhan* has been traditionally interpreted as an act of political protest, indicating that Bilal supported Ali's claim to the Caliphate, it may also have reflected his refusal to accept the corruptions made to the call to prayer. According to Imami sources, Bilal was a Shi'ite. He was praised by the Sixth Imam in the following terms: "May God bless Bilal! He loved us, the family of the Prophet, and was one of the most pious servants of Allah."

[Prayer is better than sleep]⁸⁰

Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar

Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest

La ilaha illa Allah, La ilaha illa Allah

There is no god but Allah, [There is no god but Allah]

Repeated 5 times per day in the Sunni world and 3 times a day in the Shi'ite world, the daily, weekly, monthly, yearly and lifelong repetition of the call to prayer becomes ingrained into the mind and spirit of Muslims. This is further reinforced by the recommendation to repeat the words of the *adhan* as they are recited. As the Prophet taught, "When you hear the *adhan* you should repeat the words as the *mu'adhdhin* pronounces them" (Abu Dawud).

La ilaha illa Allah / There is no god but Allah

The *shahadah* or profession of faith, *la ilaha illa Allah*, there is no god but Allah, is the essence of Islam and its first pillar [*rukn*]. As William C. Chittick explains, "All else depends upon it and derives from it" (23). According to Faruqi, "*Tawhid* is that which gives Islamic civilization its identity, which binds all of its constituents together and thus makes them an integral, organic body, which we call civilization" (73). The profession of faith is found in the Qur'an, in the Sunnah, and in supplications. It forms part of the *adhan*, the *iqamah*, and the ritual prayers. The *shahadah*, the testimony of *tawhid*, the act of affirming that Allah is one, absolute, peerless and without partners is at the very root of what it means to be Muslim. In Islam, faith is pervasive; it is both private and public, and it behooves the believers to testify to their belief in *tawhid*.

The *shahadah* is repeated in normal discourse on a daily basis by Muslims. It is used to express awe, surprise, sadness, and a myriad of other emotions. It adorns flags, stationary, mosques and other buildings. It is utilized in business transactions and to assert one's honesty. When Moroccan vendors count money, they often say: one, there is no god but Allah; two, and he has no partners: *wahid, la ilaha illa Allah; juj, la sharika lah...* In Egypt, the first part of the *shahadah* forms part of a comical popular song associated with numbers which says *wahid, la ilaha illa Allah; ithnayn*, the two grandsons of the Prophet...*arba'ah*, the wives we can have, and so forth.

In Tirmidhi (d. 892), Nasa'i (d. 915), Ibn Majah (d. 887), and Hakim (d. 1014), the Messenger of Allah says: "The best remembrance [of Allah] is [saying] *la ilaha illa*

⁸⁰ Editor's Note: These lines are exclusively uttered by Sunni Muslims for the morning call to prayer.

Allah [There is no god but Allah].” In another tradition by Tirmidhi, the Prophet explains that “When a servant of Allah utters the words *la ilaha illa Allah* [there is no god except Allah] sincerely, the doors of heaven open up for these words until they reach the Throne of Allah, so long as its utterer keeps away from the major sins” (Tirmidhi and al-Mundhiri). It is also reported that the Prophet said, “Renew your faith.” “How can we renew our faith?” they asked. The Prophet replied: “Say always: *la ilaha illa Allah*” (Ahmad). The Prophet commanded the emigrant women to be regular in remembering Allah by saying *tahlil* [*la ilaha illa Allah*], *tasbih* [*subhana Allah*], and *taqdis* [*Allahu Akbar*], to never be forgetful of Allah and His Mercy, and to count them on their fingers, for the fingers will be questioned and will speak (Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, Hakim, Shawkani, Suyuti). The Prophet said: “Whoever says: *la ilaha illa Allah wahdahu la sharika lah, lahu al-mulku wa lahu al-hamd, wa huwwa ‘ala kulli shay’in qadir*--There is no god but Allah, alone, without partner. His is the sovereignty, and His the praise, and He has power over everything--a hundred times a day will have a reward equivalent to the reward for freeing ten slaves. In addition, a hundred good deeds will be recorded for him and a hundred bad deeds of his will be wiped off, and it will be a safeguard for him from Satan that day until evening, and no one will be better in deeds than such a person except he who does more than that” (Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Nasa’i and Ibn Majah). The *shahadah* is also utilized in the following Prophetic prayer used when facing distress: *la ilaha illa Allah rabb al-‘arsh al-‘azim; rabbu al-samawati wa rabbu al-‘arsh al-karim* [There is no god but Allah, Lord of the Majestic Throne; Lord of the Skies and Lord of the Noble Throne]. The words *la ilaha illa Allah* should be the last words heard and uttered by the dying. As the Prophet taught, “Recite to those who are dying ‘There is no god but Allah’” (Abu Dawud), assuring that “If anyone’s last words are ‘There is no god but Allah,’ he will enter paradise (Abu Dawud).

Considering that *tawhid* or the oneness of God is at the epicenter [*wasat*] of Islam, it comes as no surprise that Muslims have developed many oaths revolving around it. Iraqi Muslims swear by *al-wahid wa al-ahad*, the One and Only; by *al-haqq al-mutajalli* or *al-haqq alladhi tajalla*, the truth of the One revealed through Oneness; by *tafarrada bi al-wahdaniyyah*, the One singled out in Oneness; by *alladhi la ma‘buda siwah*, by the One who alone is worshipped among a multitude of other manifestations (Masliyah 91-92).

***Bismillah* / In the name of Allah**

Despite Theodor Noldeke-Schwally’s claim that the *basmalah* was of Jewish

origin, Naiki concludes that “we have no convincing evidence that the *basmalah* is the translation of the Hebrew *b’shēm YHWH*” (Naiki 59). He also rejects the idea that the form may be an Arabized version of the Persian *pat nam i Yazdan*, “In the name of God” (59). Following common sense, Naiki concludes that since the invocations *bismi al-Lat* and *bismi al-‘Uzza* existed during pre-Islamic times, the *bismillah* developed in the Arabian Peninsula (60). To be more precise, it first manifested itself in Arabia as part of the Qur’anic revelation. As Ayatullah Pooya Yazdi explains, “*Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim* was never before used or known to any of the other creeds of the world” (10). In fact, as late as the 6th year after Hijrah, the Quraysh refused to allow the term *Bismillah* to be used in the treaty drawn between the Muslims and the Makkans at Hudaibiyyah. When Imam ‘Ali was summoned by the Prophet to write “In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful,” Suhayl ibn ‘Amr, the deputy of Quraysh, objected, saying, “I do not recognize this” (Ibn Ishaq 504). Ultimately, as a matter of compromise, the term used was *Bismika Allahumma*, “In thy Name, O Allah,” which was then current among the Quraysh (504). In fact, the Qur’an itself bears witness that the phrase *Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim* was totally unknown to the Quraysh, to such an extent that they resented the request to use it. As Almighty Allah explains: “When it is said to them, “Prostrate ye before *al-Rahman!*” They say, “And what is *al-Rahman?*” Shall we prostrate to that which thou commandest us?” (25:60). Making both Allah, in the Hijaz, and al-Rahman, in the Yamamah, equivalent to one another was a vital step in uniting Arabia under one confessional Islamic agency (see also 17:110; *basmalah*).

The expression “In the name of Allah” is recited prior to commencing any action, good or bad. It is even employed by some [less than pious] Muslims prior to consuming alcohol and drugs which is considered a mortal sin in Islam.⁸¹ This remembrance of God in moments of sin is indicative of the Muslim’s belief that Allah is All-Seeing and All-Knowing. Even in evil, Muslims acknowledge their wrong and place their hope in the mercy of the Almighty. For the Muslim, even the most mundane action has spiritual significance. As Paul Balta explains,

Avant de manger, d’écrire, de travailler, autant d’actes qui sont pour lui sacrés, le bon croyant dit: *Bismillah*... [“Au nom de Dieu”]. Si la modernité est confondue avec la sécularisation et la perte du sens du sacré, les musulmans la refusent: “Une société qui n’intègre pas le sacré est considérée comme perverse.” (90).

⁸¹ Editor’s Note: Considered a “holy plant” which gives God-consciousness, hashish has a long history of use throughout the Arab-Islamic world. Another widely consumed drug in Yemen, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, and Kenya is the narcotic and highly addictive *qat* which is known as “the leaf of Allah.”

[Before eating, writing, working, any act considered as sacred, the good Muslim says: *Bismillah*... ["In the name of God"]. If modernity is confounded with secularization and the loss of the sense of the sacred, Muslims reject it: "A society which does not integrate what is sacred is considered corrupt."]

As for eating, the Prophet instructed: "Invoke the name of Allah and eat with your right [hand]" (Muslim). In Abu Dawud (d. 817), he asks his followers to "[m]ention Allah's name, eat with your right hand and eat from what is next to you" (Bukhari, Muslim and Abu Dawud). In another tradition, he says, "[w]hen any one of you eats, he should invoke the name of Allah, the Exalted. If he forgets to invoke the name of Allah, the Exalted, at the beginning, he should say [when he does remember], 'In the name of Allah, in its beginning and its end' [*Bismillahi awwalahu wa akhirahu*] (Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi) and warns them that "[t]he devil considers the food lawful when Allah's name is not mentioned over it" (Abu Dawud). According to Imam al-Hasan ibn 'Ali: "It is the duty of every Muslim to have certain manners when he sits down to eat, four of which are obligatory: to know that Allah is the Provider; to be grateful to Him; to say *bismillah* when you start to eat; and to praise Allah for giving you health so that you could eat your food" (qtd. Bostani 97). Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 765-66) explained that "[w]hen a person says *bismillah* before drinking and after swallowing a sip says *alhamdulillah*, and then drinks another sip starting with *bismillah* and when finished says *alhamdullilah* and repeats the same for a third time, the water which enters his stomach will thank Allah and the drinker will be rewarded" (qtd. Bostani 98).

The formula "In the name of Allah" is recommended when entering one's home, retiring for the evening, and covering foodstuff, as per the following prophetic instructions: "Shut your door and make mention of Allah's name, for the devil does not open a door which has been shut; extinguish your lamp and make mention of Allah's name; cover up your vessel even by a piece of wood that you just put on it and make mention of Allah's name, and tie your water-skin mentioning Allah's name" (Abu Dawud). The Prophet further explained: "When a man enters his house and mentions Allah's name on entering and on his food, the devil says: 'You have no place to spend the night and no evening meal,' but when he enters without mentioning Allah's name, on entering the devil says: 'You have found a place to spend the night,' and when he does not mention Allah's name on his food, he says: 'You have found a place to spend the night and an evening meal'" (Abu Dawud). The Prophet also said that when a man leaves his house he should say "In the name of Allah, I trust Allah; there is no might and power

but in Allah” [*Bismillah, tawakkaltu ‘ala Allah; La hawla wa la quwwata ila bi Allah*] (Abu Dawud).

The formula “In the name of Allah” is required prior to engaging in lawful sexual relations with one’s wife. As Almighty Allah says in the Qur’an, “Your wives are a tilth unto you; so approach your tilth when or how ye will; but do some good act for your soul beforehand” (2:223). The “good act” prior to commencing intimate activity is saying “In the name of Allah.” If one fails to mention the name of Allah prior to having sex, Muslims are warned by the Prophet that the activity becomes subject to the will of the devil. As such, the following prophetic prayer is prescribed, “In the name of Allah. O Allah, protect us from Satan and also protect what you bestow upon us from Satan” (Bukhari).

The Qur’anic formula, “In the name of Allah” is also said by Muslims “whenever they are setting out on a trip, about to undertake a dangerous task, or beginning a speech. This formula is printed at the top of business letterheads and included at the beginning of reports and personal letters--it even appears on business receipts” (Nydell 88). The *bismillah* formula is also pronounced upon sleeping, the supplication being, “O Allah, in your name I die and live” [*Allahumma bismika amutu wa ahya*] (Bukhari). It is used when slaughtering animals, hunting, and setting out dogs (Abu Dawud). “In the name of Allah” is the typical header for literature: letters, legal papers, wills, essays, books...⁸² Even erotic works like *The Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, Haroun al-Makhzumi’s *The Fountains of Pleasure*, and Shaykh Nefzawi’s (d. 16th c.) *The Perfumed Garden*, commence with the words “In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful” and draw upon a rich variety of Allah phrases. Nefzawi’s work is especially interesting in its eroticism expressed in words of divine praise.⁸³ Besides serving as an

⁸² Editor’s Note: It is typically followed by the attributes *al-Rahman al-Rahim*, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful. It is even utilized as a header on all communiqués issued by the secular P.L.O. as an act of homage to the rediscovered force of Islam and a recovery of Islamic rhetoric (Balta 196). Muslim scholars like Ahmad Ghorab find it particularly offensive that academic publications like the *Journal of Islamic Studies* prohibit authors from starting any article with *bismillah* as well as saying “peace and blessings be upon him” after mentioning the name of the Prophet (18).

Besides *al-Rahman al-Rahim*, Muslims have ninety-seven other divine names to draw from. Imam Khomeini, for example, started some of his letters with *Bismillah al-Muntaqim*, In the name of Allah, the Avenger. In Islamic Iran, the volunteers for martyrdom would swear: “In the name of Allah the Avenger, and in the name of the Imam Khomeini, I swear on the Holy Book to perform my sacred duty as a Child of the Imam and Soldier of Islam in this Holy War to restore to this world the Light of Divine Justice” (Taheri 113). The assassin of Anwar al-Sadat reportedly had *Bismillah al-Muntaqim* inscribed on his gun.

epithet, the expression *bismillah* is the most commonly employed in traditional Islamic medicine. It is also called for when placing a corpse in the grave (Abu Dawud). In short, as the Prophet says, “Any activity not begun with the words ‘In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful’ is severed [from its blessings]” (Ibn Kathir).

Insha’ Allah / Allah willing

As we have seen earlier, the Qur’an compels Muslims to defer to the Divine when referring to the future.⁸⁴ The normative use of the *insha’ Allah* expression, like any norm, is enforced at an early stage of socialization by Arab Muslim parents (Gregory and Wehba 96). The native Arabic speaker “learns the expression very early in his childhood, and it is learned in the context of religious truth. In other words, God’s truth is present in the context of expression-use in the deepest, most religious sense, so it means that truth is present in the social encounter” (102). According to established norm,

the expression is uttered appropriately when one makes any plan for the future. For example, according to Muslim belief, only God has control of knowledge concerning future affairs; therefore, when any kind of human design for the future is made, the expression *insha’Allah* must be uttered to show one’s deference to God. (95)

Among Arabic Muslims, “No one thinks of making a definite appointment: it is qualified by *insha’ Allah*” since “[n]othing is inevitable or fixed; all is subject to a Providence before which men are small. However automatic it may be, reference to the deity is good form. Even atheists [and there are some] invoke the Allah they deny” (Desmond 13). Although “the canonical use of the expression is primarily religious, it is obvious that it is used in other common language contexts in another way” (Gregory and Wehba 97).

As Mohammed Farghal has demonstrated in his study, “The Pragmatics of *inshaallah* in Jordanian Arabic,” the expression has drifted extensively from its semantic import by acquiring a wide spectrum of illocutions, thus becoming a pragmatically multi-purpose expression (253). Farghal has shown that the expression serves as a general discourse marker, functions as a directive, operates as a marker of tag questions, acts as a

⁸³ Editor’s Note: Nefzawi’s (d. 16th c.) curious combination of religious expressions and erotic descriptions has quite a comical effect. His work commences with the following words: “Praise be to God who has placed the source of man’s greatest pleasure in women’s natural parts” and concludes with the confession: “In writing this book I have sinned indeed! / Your pardon, oh Lord, I surely shall need; / But if on the last day you absolve me, why then, / All my readers will join me / in a loud AMEN!” (92), a likely editorial edition.

⁸⁴ Editor’s Note: In fact, the general trend is to defer to the Divine at all times. For example, in Egypt, to express good wishes to someone before or during Ramadan, you say, *Ramadan karim* [Gracious Ramadan] to which the response is *Allahu Akram* [Allah is More Gracious] (Nydell 91).

politeness marker, and works as a mitigator, as an expressive, and even as an apology.

The *insha' Allah* expression, like the rest of the Allah Lexicon, is problematic for outsiders, that is, all those who are not Arabic-speaking Muslims, even those who belong to the community of believers or the *ummah*. Research conducted by Gregory and Wehba encountered

a differential interpretation in comparing the meaning of the expression as used by the native speaker...and the foreigner... Egyptians use the term between themselves and transmit a meaning which is very different from the foreign version, and this is the source of some of the difficulties with the expression on an intercultural basis. Use of the expression intraculturally between foreigners from Western type cultures has taken on the meaning of something like *maybe* [with a low probability] *I'll come, insha' Allah*, which according to Egyptian informants is an incorrect use of the expression. (103)

The expression can also be used pejoratively which can be confusing to the non-native speaker of Arabic (Farghal 255). In whatever way it is employed, *insha' Allah* is the hallmark of Arabs, regardless of where they come from and/or what dialect they speak (268).

Allahu Akbar / Allah is the Greatest

The *takbir* or saying of *Allahu Akbar*, namely, that Allah is the Greatest, is one of the slogans of Islam,⁸⁵ applicable to numerous situations, from expressions of awe to battle cries during *jihad* or sacred struggles. In Ahmad (d. 855), Abu Dawud (d. 817) and Tirmidhi (d. 892), the Prophet says: "Gabriel came to me and commanded me to order my Companions to raise their voices in *takbir*." According to the sixth Shi'ite Imam, the expression *Allahu Akbar* is also said when admiring something in order to avert the evil eye (Ispahany 158-59).

A'udhu billah / I Seek Refuge in Allah

The seeking of refuge in Allah is required prior to reciting the Qur'an, in moments of fear, and when exposed to evil. At times it is specific, as in "I take refuge in Allah from Satan the Rejected," and at times more general as in the prophetic prayer "O Allah, I seek refuge from you from all kinds of evil" (Bukhari and Muslim). It is also

⁸⁵ Editor's Note: In Iran, for example, the two main slogans during the Islamic Revolution were *Allahu Akbar* and *la ilaha illa Allah*. These two symbolically charged phrases expressed discontent with the monarchy, opposition to oppression, the sovereignty of the Supreme over all affairs, the readiness to die for Islam, and total commitment to the cause of establishing an Islamic Republic with the Qur'an as its constitution. In Palestine, the cry *Allahu Akbar* is even made by those who follow the directives of the secular P.L.O. (Balta 196).

recommended when entering the washroom in the form, “O Allah, I seek refuge in You from all kinds of evil” [*Allahumma inni a‘udhu bika mina al-khubthi wa al-khaba’ith*] (Bukhari and Muslim). The Prophet also taught Muslims to take refuge in Allah as protection from being misers, from laziness, the anti-Christ, cowardice, old age, debt, overpowering afflictions, the difficulties of life and death, sin, epidemics, diseases, hell fire, wealth and poverty, as well as to increase guidance, when performing ablutions, and so forth. If someone requests refuge for the sake of Allah, it is incumbent on Muslims to comply. As the Messenger explained, “If anyone asks for refuge for the sake of Allah, give him refuge; and if anyone asks you [for something] for the pleasure of Allah, give him” (Abu Dawud). The expression “I take refuge in Allah” is extensively used in Islamic medicine.

Alhamdulillah / Praise be to Allah and Yarham Allah / May Allah have Mercy

The Prophet recommended people to say *alhamdulillah* at all times. It is said when getting dressed, “He who puts on clothes should say ‘Praise be to Allah’” (Abu Dawud). It is obligatory for Muslims to praise God after eating. The Prophet himself used to say “Praise be to Allah, who gave us to eat and to drink and made us Muslims” [*alhamdulillah alladhi at‘amana wa saqana wa ja‘alana muslimin*] (Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi). *Alhamdulillah* should also be said upon sneezing. As the Prophet said: “Invoke a blessing on the one who sneezes” (Abu Dawud). He further explained: “When someone sneezes, he should say ‘Praise be to Allah,’ and his brother should respond ‘Allah have mercy on you.’ When he says, ‘Allah have mercy on you,’ he should reply, ‘Allah guide you and better your affairs’” [*yahdikumu Allahu wa yuslih balakum*] (Bukhari).⁸⁶

There are several traditions in which the Prophet blessed people [*tashmit*] who sneezed (Bukhari). In one case, when two people sneezed, he only blessed the one who praised Allah (Bukhari). He explained that “Allah likes sneezing and dislikes yawning, so if someone sneezes and then praises Allah, then it is obligatory on every Muslim who hears him to say, ‘May Allah have mercy on you’” (Bukhari). The Jews, who were opposed to his prophecy, used to sneeze in the presence of the Prophet, hoping that he would say “Allah have mercy on you!” but he would always say “May Allah guide you and grant you well-being!” (Abu Dawud). The Prophet also used the prayer “Praise be to Allah who gives us life after death and unto Him is the return” [*alhamdulillah alladhi ahyana ba‘da ma amatana wa ilayhi al-nushur*].

⁸⁶ Editor’s Note: There are other variables to this ritualized routine. When someone sneezes, the person says *alhamdulillah*, the other responds *Rahimaka Allah*, to which the person who sneezed responds *Rahimana wa rahimakum*.

The expression, “Praise be to Allah” is also recommended when seeing the new moon, when going out, and when returning home (Abu Dawud). As a general endorsement and encouragement for praising Allah, it is reported that the Prophet said: “The best prayer is *alhamdulillah*” (Nasa’i, Ibn Majah and Hakim) and warned that “Every important matter which is not begun by an expression of praise to Allah is maimed” (Abu Dawud). While the Arabic *alhamdulillah*

seems quite similar to the English thank you...it is conventionally used in ways in which the English expression is not; it can function as a response to an enquiry after one’s health, to indicate that all is well, or as an indication that one has finished eating, to decline an offer of more food by an over-zealous host. (Davies 83)

Along with *bismillah*, *alhamdulillah* is among the first formulas learned by Muslim children. These religious formulas of reverence are far more stressed by parents than those for requesting and thanking people.

Rahima Allah / May Allah have mercy

The expression *Rahima Allah* or “May Allah have mercy upon...” occurs in many prophetic traditions invoking mercy upon those who do good deeds. This includes the Prophet’s saying, “May Allah have mercy upon the man who is generous while selling, buying and making a demand [of his balance from the people]” (Bukhari). The invocation is also used when a deceased person is mentioned, much like “rest in peace” but with a clearly religious sense devoid in the English. In Islam, “peace be upon him” is limited to prophets and, for Shi’ites, Imams; *radiyya Allahu ‘anhum*, “May Allah be pleased with them,” is used for Companions of the Prophet and *rahima Allah* is used for ordinary mortals.

Al-salamu ‘alaykum / Peace be upon you

While the greeting *al-salamu ‘alaykum* may fall outside the Allah Lexicon when used in the general sense of “May peace be upon you,” it merits inclusion as it can imply “May the peace [of Allah] be upon you” or mean quite directly “May Peace be with you” in the sense that *al-Salam*, the Peace, is a Divine Attribute of Allah. In fact, some Arabic speakers insert *Allah* into the peace greeting, saying *salamu Allah ‘alaykum* to specify this intention. A variant “goodbye” in Arabic is *ma’a sallamah* or *bi al-sallamah* [(go) in peace and safety], the response to which is *Allahi yusallmak* [(May) Allah give you safety]. The *taslim*, the saying of *salam*, is also a part of the ritual prayer in the form of *al-salamu ‘alayka ayyuha al-nabi* or “Peace be upon you o Prophet” which is part of the

Allah Lexicon, for praising the Prophet is praising Allah (Qur'an 33:7). It should be noted that a living person is usually addressed by the plural form *al-salamu 'alaykum* as one is addressing both the person and his/her guardian angels. The singular form, *al-salamu 'alayka* or *al-salamu alayki*, is used to send one's salutations to a deceased person.

The Prophet said, "The first person to greet is the best in the eyes of Allah and His Messenger" (qtd. Bostani 95); "The laziest of people is the one who does not...greet"; (96) "The cheapest of people is the one who does not greet" (96) and "One who leaves a gathering after sending a greeting, deserves any reward sent upon those who remain after his departure" (96); "whoever greets you with the formula *al-salamu 'alaykum* will be rewarded ten times. Whoever greets you with the formula *al-salamu 'alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu* will be rewarded thirty times" (96). The Prophet said: "Do not respond to a person who speaks to you until he has greeted you appropriately" (95). He also said, "Whoever visits you and does not greet you, do not offer him food until he greets you" (95). According to Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, "One of the signs of humility from a Muslim is that he greets everyone he meets" (95).

The goal of the *salam* greeting is evident: to foster fraternity and good will among Muslims.⁸⁷ The Prophet explained, "You will not enter paradise until you have faith and you will not have faith until you love for your brother what you love for yourself. May I not direct you to a thing whereby you will love one another? Disseminate the practice of saying 'Peace be upon you' amongst yourselves" (Muslim). Social harmony was encouraged through such teachings as "Eat together, and do not separate, for the blessing is in the company" (Ibn Majah). With social welfare in mind, the Prophet encouraged Muslims to greet each other with words of peace and to shake hands, for as he explained: "The best [way] of greeting is shaking hands" (Ahmad and Tirmidhi); and "The two Muslims who meet and shake hands with each other are forgiven before they separate" (Ahmad). The Prophet also used to greet children as he passed them by (Bukhari and Muslim). While Arab culture considers it inappropriate or offensive for men to address non-*mahram* [unrelated] women, it is reported by Imam Ahmad (d. 855) and al-Kulayni (d. 941?) that the Prophet was in the practice of sending his *salam* to

⁸⁷ Editor's Note: Holmes would thus be correct that politeness formulas serve as "social lubricants", acting to increase or consolidate the solidarity between the speaker and the addressee" (486). This greeting of peace, however, was not embraced by the Medinan Jews in the time of the Prophet. In fact, rather than saying *al-salamu 'alaykum* to the Prophet, they used to greet him with *al-samu 'alaykum* or "May death be upon you" (Muslim).

women as he passed them.⁸⁸ Even Imam ‘Ali (d. 661) used to salute women, avoiding only adolescent girls for fear of appearing flirtatious.⁸⁹ Almighty Allah describes the *salam* as the greeting of the inhabitants of paradise (7:46; 10:10; 14:23; 36:58). Clearly, the centrality of the *salam* salutation illustrates that peace, not violence, is the essence of Islam.

***Astaghfirullah* / I ask forgiveness from Allah**

The Prophet encouraged *tawbah*, repentance to Allah, via the supplication, *astaghfirullah* or “I ask forgiveness from Allah.” The Prophet himself, despite being *ma’sum*, or divinely protected from sin, according to the general consensus of Sunni and Shi‘ite scholars, repeatedly repented to Allah.⁹⁰ He swore that, “By Allah, I ask Allah’s forgiveness and turn to him in repentance more than seventy times a day” (Bukhari). The grace of God and the mercy of Islam are manifest in the sacred *hadith* where Almighty Allah says:

O Son of Adam, whatever you asked Me and expect from Me I forgave -- respecting that which you owed to Me--and I don't care [how great this was]. O Son of Adam, even if your sins pile up to the sky and then you seek My forgiveness I will forgive you, and O Son of Adam, even if you have sins the size of the Earth, but you meet Me without associating any other thing with Me I will forgive you. (Tirmidhi)

While prayers like *astaghfirullah* may become formulaic, the Imams from the Household

⁸⁸ Editor’s Note: The Prophet’s attitude of respect towards the female gender is in sad contrast to the common Arab custom of making cat-calls to women as they pass by. As the Messenger of Allah warned, “Beware of sitting along roadsides.” His Companions asked him, “Oh, Messenger of Allah! We cannot stop these meetings on roadsides where we talk about different matters.” The Messenger of Allah said: “If you refuse to stop having such meetings, then you should give the road its rights.” They asked him, “What are the rights of the road?” He said, “To cast down your eyes; to forbear harms to others; to reply to salutation, to enjoin what is right and to forbid what is wrong” (Bukhari). On the occasion of the Farewell Pilgrimage, the Prophet commanded his followers to: “Observe your duty to Allah with respect to women, and treat them well”, echoing the Qur’anic commandment to treat women kindly (4:19).

⁸⁹ As Imam Husayn (d. 680) acknowledged

The Messenger of Allah used to salute women and they used to reply his salutation. While the Commander of the Faithful, Imam ‘Ali, also used to salute women, he disliked to salute young women and said, ‘I feared that her voice would stir me, earning me more sin than reward.’ (Kulayni).

⁹⁰ Editor’s Note: It is reported that the Prophet used to pray for forgiveness seventy or one hundred times a day by repeating the formula “I ask forgiveness from Allah.” The Messenger of Allah and the other Infallibles repented to Allah in their conditions as servants of the Almighty, their inadequacies as creatures and for their existence as separate beings (Chittick xxx-xxxiv). Regardless of the objections of the Wahhabis and Salafis, “[t]he doctrine of the sinlessness of prophets has...always been an admitted principle among Muslims” (‘Ali 232).

of the Prophet stressed the importance of saying such things with sincerity.⁹¹ One particularly poignant example relates Imam ‘Ali’s (d. 661) reaction to a fellow Muslim who was repeating *astaghfirullah* without taking into careful consideration what these words actually mean. The Imam said:

Do you know what *istighfar* [asking forgiveness] is? *Istighfar* is meant for people of a high position. It is a word that stands on six supports. The first is to repent over the past; the second is to make a firm determination never to revert to it; the third is to discharge all the rights of people so that you may meet Allah quite clean with nothing to account for: the fourth is to fulfill every obligation which you ignored [in the past] so that you may now do justice with it; the fifth is to aim at the flesh grown as a result of unlawful earning, so that you may melt it by grief [of repentance] till the skin touches the bones and a new flesh grows between them; and the sixth is to make the body taste the pain of obedience as you [previously] made it taste the sweetness of disobedience. On such an occasion you may say *astaghfirullah*. (665)

As the Prophet explained, sincerity and constancy are the keys to opening the doors of divine grace. As he explains, “If one supplicates without fail for forgiveness from Allah, He finds a way out for him to get out of every distress and difficulty, and gives him sustenance through ways utterly unthought-of” (Abu Dawud, Nasa’i, Ibn Majah and Hakim).

***Jazaka Allahu khayran* / Allah will reward you well**

Rather than using a simple *shukran* or thank you, which is devoid of deference to the divine, the Prophet taught that “When someone does you good and you say ‘Allah will reward you well’ to the person, you have done the utmost in praise” (Tirmidhi). In other words, the greatest way to thank people is to call upon God to reward them.

***Subhana Allah* / Glory be to Allah**

The expression *subhana Allah*, or Glory be to Allah, is prevalent in supplications and forms part of the ritual *salah* [prayer] in the form of *subhana Allah* or *subhana rabbiya al-a‘la* [wa bi hamdih] or “Glory be to my Lord Allah, the Most High, and to Him is the praise” and *subhana rabbiya al-‘azim* [wa bi hamdih] or “Glory be to my Lord Allah, the Mighty.” According to the Prophet, “There are two phrases that are light on the tongue but heavy on the scale of rewards and are dear to the Gracious One. These are:

⁹¹ Editor’s Note: This is the paradox in which the Allah Lexicon continues to exist, that is, a phrase that is at once formula and genuinely sincere. It seems that this issue was recognized as far back as the Prophet.

subhana Allah wa bi hamdihi, ‘Glory be to Allah and to Him is the Praise,’ and *subhana Allah al-‘azim*, ‘Glory be to Allah, the Glorious’” (Bukhari, Muslim, and Tirmidhi). The Prophet said: “I love repeating: *subhana Allah, wa alhamdulillah, wa la ilaha illa Allah, wa Allahu Akbar* [Glory be to Allah, and Praise be to Allah, and There is no god but Allah, and Allah is the Greatest,’ more than all that the sun shines upon’ (Muslim and Tirmidhi). The Prophet said: “Shall I tell you the words that Allah loves the most?” I said: “Yes, tell me, O Messenger of Allah.” He said: “The words dearest to Allah are: *subhana Allah wa bi hamdihi*” [Glory be to Allah and to Him is the praise] (Muslim and Tirmidhi). In Tirmidhi’s (d. 892) version, we also find the following: “The words dearest to Allah which He has chosen for His angels are: *subhana rabbi wa bi hamdihi*, ‘Glory be to my Lord and to Him is the praise.’” The Prophet said: “Whoever says: ‘Glory be to Allah, the Great, and to Him is the praise’ will have a palm tree planted for him in paradise” (Tirmidhi). The Prophet said: “Perform enduring good deeds [*al-baqiyyat al-salihah*] more frequently.” They asked, “What are these enduring good deeds?” The Prophet replied: “*Takbir* [*Allahu Akbar*], *tahlil* [*la ilaha illa Allah*], *tasbih* [*subhana Allah*], *alhamdulillah*, and *la hawla wa la quwwata illa billah*” (Nasa’i and Hakim). The Prophet said:

During the Night Journey, I met Ibrahim who said to me: ‘O Muhammad, convey my greetings to your Community, and tell them that the paradise is of pure land, its water is sweet, and its expanse is vast, spacious and even. And its seedlings are: *subhana Allah* [Glory to Allah] *wa alhamdulillah* [and Praise to Allah] *wa la ilaha illa Allah* [and there is no god but Allah] *wa Allahu Akbar* [and Allah is the Greatest].’

Tirmidhi (d. 892) and Tabarani’s (d. 971) version adds “There is no power nor strength, save through Allah.” The Prophet said: “The dearest phrases to Allah are four: *subhana Allah, wa alhamdulillah, wa la ilaha illa Allah, wa Allahu Akbar*” [Glory be to Allah, and Praise be to Allah, and There is no god but Allah, and Allah is the Greatest] (Muslim). In the version of Bukhari (d. 870), Muslim (d. 875), Tirmidhi (d. 892), and Nasa’i (d. 915), we find this addition: “Whoever says: *subhana Allah wa bi hamdihi*—Glorified is Allah with all praise to Him—a hundred times during a day, will have all his sins wiped off even if they were as numerous as the foam on the surface of the sea.”

Al-shukrulillah or Shukranlillah / Thank you Allah

Rather than a simple secular *shukran* or “thanks,” many observant Muslims express thanks by saying *jazaka Allahu khayran*, “Allah will reward you well,” *baraka*

Allahu fik, “May Allah bless you” or *shukran wa al-shukrulillah*, “Thank you and thank Allah,” following the guidance of the Prophet who teaches that “He who does not thank people does not thank Allah” (Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, and others).

Inna lillahi / From Allah we come

Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un, from Allah we come and to Him is our return, is a Qur'anic verse which is recited upon the mention of death (2:156). The Prophet taught his followers to say “From Allah we come and to Him is our return” upon hearing of the passing of a person (Malik).

Masha' Allah / It is Allah's Will

The expression *masha' Allah*, it is the will of Allah, is used when witnessing an event of astonishment or general favor, and unlike *alhamdulillah* is never used or said for bad events. It may be expressed upon seeing a person who is ill or handicapped. It may also be used sarcastically when referring to someone who is acting a fool with the sense of “Poor sap” or “You poor idiot.” When meeting a person's small child, etiquette calls for praise carefully mixed with blessings, including “May Allah keep him” or “This is what Allah wills,” reassuring parents that there is no envy (Nydell 121).

La'nat Allah 'ala.../ May Allah's curse be upon...

While the Allah Lexicon is overwhelmingly positive, it does include a considerable body of curses, including *la'nat Allah 'ala*, “May Allah's curse be upon,” and *kadhala Allah*, “May Allah forsake,” among many others.⁹² Muslim scholars are divided as to the legality of cursing in Islam. Those who oppose it point to traditions such as “Do not invoke Allah's curse, Allah's anger or hell” (Abu Dawud), the Prophet's refusal to curse the Makkan unbelievers with the words “I came as a mercy to mankind” (Muslim), which alludes to chapter 21, verse 7, of the Holy Qur'an, and the following tradition:

⁹² Editor's Note: As Devin J. Stewart explains, cognate curses, root-echo responses to a number of common verbs and expressions, “are an important type of Egyptian formulaic speech with parallels in classical Arabic and other modern Arabic dialects” (327-28). However, “God rarely appears as agent in the cognate curses” (350). In fact, “God is the direct agent in only five curses in the corpus”, a feature which stands in marked contrast to common blessings such as *Allah yukhallik*, “May Allah preserve you”, *rabbina mayihrimnash minnak*, “May Allah not deprive us of you”, where Allah is most often, though not invariably, the agent as in *Allah yusallimak*, “May Allah keep you safe” or *Allah yin'im 'alayk*, “May Allah bless you” (333). In contrast to English and Québécois French, there are only a few curses against religion in the Arabic language (Masliyah 2001: 288).

Verily when a servant curses a thing, the curse rises up to Heaven and the doors of Heaven are closed before it, then it falls down to earth and its doors are also closed, then it goes to the right side, and afterwards to the left side but when it does not find a place of entrance, it returns to him who is cursed, and if he deserves that [it falls upon him], otherwise, it returns to the one who curses. (Abu Dawud)

Those who endorse cursing point not only to traditions, but to the Holy Qur'an itself which presents the damning of infidels, hypocrites and apostates as a godly act. As Almighty Allah explains,

In this world We made a curse to follow them: and on the Day of Judgment they will be among the loathed [and despised] (28:42); Those who reject faith, and die rejecting, on them is Allah's curse, and the curse of angels, and of all mankind (2:161); How shall Allah guide those who reject faith after they accepted it and bore witness that the Messenger was true and that clear signs had come unto them? But Allah guides not a people unjust. Of such the reward is that on them [rests] the curse of Allah, of His angels, and of all mankind (3:86).

The expression *ahlik* or "Make them perish" is also fairly common in the Qur'an and is mainly applied to wrongdoers in general, rather than being more specifically aimed at blasphemers and polytheists, as *la'ana* [to curse] and *khadhala* [to forsake] are (Christie 262).

In the books of *hadith*, there are many examples of Allah, the Prophet and the angels cursing evil-doers. In Tirmidhi (d. 892), we read that the Most Noble Messenger cursed [*la'ana*] ten persons in the case of wine: the one who extracted the juice, the one who demanded its extraction, the one who drank it, the one who carried it, the one to whom it was carried, the one who served it, the one who sold it, the one who used its income, as well as its buyer and seller. In Muslim (d. 875), he cursed [*la'ana*] the person who took interest, who gave interest, who kept a record of it and who bore witness to it. In Ibn Majah (d. 887), the Prophet says that if a person sells something defective without informing the purchaser, he remains under the anger of Allah and the angels curse him [*tal'anuhu*] incessantly. In this same book, the Messenger of Allah says that the person who hoards commodities is cursed [*mal'un*]. He also cursed sodomites, catamites, lesbians, zoophiles, cuckolds, transvestites, tyrants and oppressors, alcoholics, women who do not observe Islamic modest dress and men who allow their women folk to go out

in public without *hijab*, among hundreds of others.⁹³ In all such instances, the phrase “Cursed...” serves as a rhetorical device like the formulaic “Blessed are those...”

In a document described by al-Tabari (d. 923), which was drafted by al-Mu‘tadid as an exhortation against Umayyad sympathies, it is stated that *La‘anahum Allah... ‘ala lisan al-nabi*, “God cursed them...by the words of the Prophet,” and that upon seeing Abu Sufyan riding a donkey driven by Mu‘awiyah and Yazid ibn Mu‘awiyah, Muhammad said, *La‘ana Allahu al-qa’id wa al-rakib wa al-sa’iq*, “May Allah curse the leader, the rider and the driver” (Tabari 2170). All of these invocations find their roots in the Qur’an.

There are an ample number of curses in the Shi‘ite Sunnah. Some of these are curses directed to wicked people in general, such as Imam ‘Ali’s (d. 661) saying that “Allah has cursed the corrupt, the corrupter, and the one who incites corruption” (qtd. Bostani); others are specific, targeting the enemies of *Ahl al-Bayt* such as those who massacred Imam Husayn (d. 680), the grandson of the Prophet, along with his family and friends. According to Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq,

Whoever remembers the thirst of Husayn while drinking water and curses those who martyred him will receive one hundred thousand blessings, one hundred thousand of his sins will be forgiven, his rank will be raised one hundred thousand times in paradise and Allah will resurrect him with a radiant countenance. (qtd. Bostani 99)

In light of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, a general prohibition against cursing cannot even be considered. Rather, the legality or illegality of cursing in Islam depends on its context: on who is being cursed and for what reason. Indiscriminate cursing is clearly condemned by Allah and His Messenger as seen in the aforementioned verses and traditions. The cursing of inveterate and unrepentant evil-doers as well as violently hostile enemies of Islam clearly comes across as a godly act in the holy book and the *ahadith*.

After the demise of the Prophet, a certain amount of cursing, both formal and informal, did take place. Al-Tabari (d. 923) cites cases where individuals were formally cursed [using *la‘ana*, to curse] by the Caliph and their formal cursing from the pulpit of mosques (2048). One particularly abominable act was the Umayyad practice of cursing Imam ‘Ali (d. 661) and his family from the pulpit and having soldiers kill any Muslim

⁹³ Editor’s Note: The best sources for prophetic curses and condemnations are books referring to the apocalypse and the hereafter, for example, *The Spectacle of Death Including Glimpses of Life Beyond the Grave*, by Khawaja Mohammad Islam.

who refused to do so (Jordac 290-91; 310-312; Tijani 177, 231).⁹⁴

At the time of the Crusades, there were cases of Muslim writers, such as the Damascene jurist ‘Ali ibn Tahir al-Sulami in his *Kitab al-jihad*, who appear to have coined new modes of expression such as *ahlakahum Allah*, “May Allah make them perish,” and *mahlikahum ajma’in*, “May Allah quickly bring about their total destruction” (Christie 255). The verb’s root is the second most common curse in the Qur’an, but is only used in varying forms three times throughout the entire scripture (25:29; 17:22; 3:160) (260). Despite its Qur’anic origin, this particular curse “failed to catch on” (Christie 255). Muslim writers also used the invocation *qabbahahum Allah*, “May Allah reject them as being repugnant,” which comes from a Qur’anic reference to the Pharaoh and his followers who opposed Moses (28:42). In the early period of the Crusades, it remains the least common expression of the three. As Christie explains,

It can only be assumed that since its root only occurs once in the Qur’an, it sprang less readily to the minds of writers than did the other two expressions. In addition, as the original Qur’anic reference is to removal on the Day of Judgment, rather than in the near future, this made it less popular than the more immediate *khadhalahum Allah*, “May Allah forsake them” (262).

In Ibn al-Qalanisi’s chronicle, *Tarikh Dimashq*, he curses the Franks in a similar style, saying *wa Allahu ta’ala yuhsinu al-idhlala minhum wa yaj’alu al-bawara ‘alayhim*, “May Allah do good by granting victory over them, and quickly bring about ruin and destruction upon them” (256). Be it *khadhalahum Allah*, “may Allah forsake them,” *la’anahum Allah*, “May Allah curse them,” or *qabbahahum Allahu*, “May Allah make them repugnant,” the roots of the verbs *khadhala* [to forsake], *la’ana* [to curse] and *qabbaha* [to reject as repugnant] are all present in the Qur’an and “[i]t is reasonable to assume that anyone writing during the period [of the Crusades] would have a reasonable knowledge of the Qur’an” (Christie 258). Of these three most common curses, “by far the most common root is that of the verb *la’ana* [to curse], and this is the verb which is used most commonly for suffixed invocations” (258-59). The majority of later writers preferred *la’ana*, “to curse,” as opposed to *khadhala*, “to forsake” (261). Eventually, as relations improved between the Muslims and the Franks, it may be that writers began to think less about the meanings of the invocations they were using, and so they became a

⁹⁴ Editor’s Note: All of this despite the Prophet’s declarations that “Loving ‘Ali is belief and hating him is hypocrisy” (Bukhari, Muslim, Nasa’i, Tirmidhi, Sadduq, Mufid, and Kulayni), “He who curses ‘Ali, curses me” (Hakim, Ahmad, and Nasa’i), “He who insults ‘Ali, insults me. He who insults me, insults Allah. And he who insults Allah, Allah will cast him into Hell” (Hakim, Nasa’i, Ahmad, Tabari, and Suyuti), as well as hundreds of similar sayings too lengthy to cite.

‘label’ (261).

In contemporary times, we find an abundance of curses being used throughout the Arabic Islamic world. While some of these are sanctioned by the Scripture and the Sunnah, the vast majority of them fall into the category of forbidden phrases. These include the expressions of colloquial or regional usage *an‘al dinak* [or more commonly *Allah yan‘al dinak*], “May Allah curse your religion,” *ishtawa madhhabak*, “May your faith be grilled,” *abēl ibdinak*, “Damn your religion”; and *inn‘al-rabbak*, “May your Lord be cursed,” all of which are often used (Masliyah 2001: 288)--mainly in Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Palestine. Although they are common among a certain segment of society, such expressions are obviously not employed by everyone, especially people of class, culture, and faith. Besides these few examples of cursing God and religion, the Arabic language contains curses and insults attacking one’s honor, curses and insults pertaining to health; curses against property, curses involving bodily defects and professions; curses and insults employing animals, curses against parents, curses wishing death, curses and insults directed against plants and inanimate objects, curses and insults against bodily parts, curses borrowed from other languages, and a handful of curses against the honor of non-Muslims and people of different origin, all of which fall into the category of forbidden or *haram* curses.

The origin of these evil oaths is as yet unclear. According to Masliyah, “the majority of Iraqi Arabic curses show traits of Biblical maledictions as far as motifs, purport, and significance are concerned” (2001: 308). In his view, such curses are part and parcel of Semitic culture and were retained from pre-Islamic times. According to ‘Abd el-Jawad,

Swearing in Arabic has evolved “degeneratively” or has undergone “semantic bleaching or derogation” both qualitatively and quantitatively. Out of what is supposed to be the formal and sacred oath which is religiously restricted in quality [not to swear by anything other than the Almighty Allah and quantitatively [to refrain from swearing and making Allah the frequent object of their oaths] evolved the current practice of very frequent swearing not only by Allah but also by persons, objects, values, etc., thus violating the restrictions of quality and quantity. *In many aspects, speakers seem to have retained or reintroduced the pre-Islamic practices.* [The emphasis is ours] (239)

Despite the fact that these condemned curses employ the name Allah, they are the

antithesis of Islam and form part of a counter-tradition.⁹⁵

The *Salawat* or Prayers for the Prophet

According to the Holy Qur'an, "Allah and His Angels send blessings on the Prophet: O Ye that believe! Send ye blessings on him, and salute him with respect" (33:7). When the Muslims asked the Prophet Muhammad, "How are we to salute you?," he replied: "Say: 'O Allah, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad'" (Bukhari and Muslim). In the Sunnah, the Prophet told his followers that "When you hear the *mu'adhdhin*, repeat what he says, invoke a blessing on me, for everyone who invokes a blessing on me will receive ten blessings from Allah" (Abu Dawud). When asked how Muslims should bless him, Muhammad told them to say *Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammadin wa 'ala ali Muhammad* [O Allah, bless Muhammad and the Family of Muhammad]. The Prophet said: "If people sit in an assembly in which they do not remember Allah nor invoke a blessing on the Prophet, it will be a cause of grief for them on the Day of Judgment" (Tirmidhi).

The Prayer Beads: The *Tasbih*, *Masbahah* and *Sibhah*

While some people have attempted to argue that the prayer beads are an innovation or *bid'ah* in Islam, the use of the rosary for the purpose of remembering Allah is clearly documented in the Hadith literature.⁹⁶ Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, for example, reported that once the Prophet saw a woman who had some date-stones or pebbles which she was using as beads to glorify Allah. The Prophet said to her, "Let me tell you something which would be easier or more excellent for you than that." So he prescribed her a lengthy *dhikr*:

subhana Allahi 'adada ma khalaqa fi al-sama',
subhana Allahi 'adada ma khalaqa fi al-ard,
subhana Allahi 'adada ma khalaqa bayna dhalik,
subhana Allahi 'adada ma huwa khaliq,

⁹⁵ Editor's Note: These condemned curses may form part of pre-Islamic paganism which was perpetuated by the *munafiqin* or hypocrites, Muslims who professed Islam but who remained heathens in their hearts, eagerly anticipating any opportunity to undermine it. Despite Masliyah's claims that these curses "have lost their original meaning and denote astonishment or an exclamation" (2001: 288), they continue to be perceived as offensive by religious people and educated speakers of the language. In truth, it seems difficult to believe that a sincere believer would ever curse Allah and the religion of Allah. While they may be used by ignorant Muslims, they may have been coined by infidels or pseudo-Muslims. Some of these forbidden curses may also trace back to the reciprocal cursing which was an inseparable accompaniment to war among the pagan Arabs.

⁹⁶ Editor's Note: Those who hold that the prayer beads are an innovation include the Wahhabis / Salafis and some Qadiani scholars like Muhammad 'Ali who claims that "There is...no authority whatever for the practice of repeating these names on a rosary or otherwise" (162). The general view, however, among *ahl al-bayt*, *ahl al-sunnah* and *ahl al-sufiyyah* is that prayer beads were prophetically permitted.

Allahu Akbaru 'adada ma khalaqa fi al-sama',
Allahu Akbaru 'adada ma khalaqa fi al-ard,
Allahu Akbaru 'adada ma khalaqa bayna dhalik,
Allahu Akbaru 'adada ma huwa khaliq,
alhamdulillah 'adada ma khalaqa fi al-sama',
alhamdulillah 'adada ma khalaqa fi al-ard,
alhamdulillah 'adada ma khalaqa bayna dhalik,
alhamdulillah 'adada ma huwa khaliq,
la ilaha illa Allah 'adada ma khalaqa fi al-sama',
la ilaha illa Allah 'adada ma khalaqa fi al-ard,
la ilaha illa Allah 'adada ma khalaqa bayna dhalik,
la ilaha illa Allah 'adada ma huwa khaliq,
la hawla wa la quwwata illa billahi 'adada ma khalaqa fi al-sama',
la hawla wa la quwwata illa billahi 'adada ma khalaqa fi al-ard,
la hawla wa la quwwata illa billahi 'adada ma khalaqa bayna dhalik,
la hawla wa la quwwata illa billahi 'adada ma huwa khaliq.

[Glory be to Allah as many times as the number of what He has created in Heaven / Glory be to Allah as many times as the number of what He has created on Earth / Glory be to Allah as many times as the number of what He has created between them / Glory be to Allah as many times as the number of that which He is creating. The above is repeated four times substituting “Glory be to Allah” by “Allah is the Greatest” in the first repetition, “Praise be to Allah” in the second repetition, “There is no god but Allah” in the third repetition, and “There is no might or power except in Allah” in the fourth repetition.]

(Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, Ibn Hibban, al-Nasa'i, and Hakim)

Safiyyah bint Huyayy, the Prophet's wife, said: “The Prophet came in to see me and in front of me there were four thousand date-stones with which I was making *tasbih*” [counting *subhana Allah*]. He said: “You make *tasbih* with so many! Shall I teach you what surpasses your number of *tasbih*?” She said: “Teach me!” He said: “Say: *Subhana Allah 'adada khalqihi*--Glory to Allah as many times as the number of His creation” (Tirmidhi, Hakim and Suyuti).

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah tells the Prophet to “Remind people, for reminding benefits them.” The reminder of Muslims has various forms, public and private. A public form of this reminder is the *adhan*. The prayer-beads, known in Arabic as *masbahah*,

sibhah and *tasbih*, were employed by the Companions of the Prophet as an act of private remembrance. It is for that reason that the *tasbih* was called by them *mudhakkir* or *mudhakkirah*--“reminder,” and there is a narration traced to the Prophet wherein he said: *ni‘ma al-mudhakkir al-sibhah*: “What a good reminder are the prayer-beads!” Shawkani (d. 1839) narrates it from ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661) as evidence for the usefulness of prayer-beads in *Nayl al-awtar* (2:317) from Daylami's (d. 1115) narration in *Musnad al-firdaws* and Suyuti (d. 1505) cites it in his *fatwa* [edict/ruling] on prayer-beads in *al-Hawi li al-fatawi* (2:38). Al-Daylami narrates in *Musnad al-firdaws* through Zaynab bint Sulayman ibn ‘Ali, and from Umm al-Hasan bint Ja‘far from her father, from her grandfather, from ‘Ali, and it is traced back to the Prophet: “What a good reminder are the prayer-beads!”

La hawla wa la quwwata illa billah / There is no might or power save Allah

The expression “There is no might or power save Allah” was described by the Prophet as a jewel from the throne of paradise (Bukhari, Muslim, and Ghazali). The Prophet said, “When a man utters at the time of his death that ‘there is no might or power save Allah,’ the fire of hell will not touch him” (Ghazali).

al-asma’ al-husna / The Most Beautiful Names of Allah

The ninety-nine names of Allah which appear in the Holy Qur’an constitute an important part of the Allah Lexicon. As we read in the Qur’an, “Call upon Allah, or call upon Rahman, by whatever ye call Upon Him [it is well]: for to Him belong the most beautiful names” (17:110).⁹⁷ There are numerous traditions in which the Prophet refers to the divine attributes, including: “Allah is *al-Jamil* [the Beautiful] and loves beauty” (Muslim).⁹⁸ It is related by the Prophet that “Allah has ninety-nine names, one hundred less one; and he who memorizes them all by heart will enter paradise” (Bukhari). With such a prophetic promise in mind, it is common practice, particularly among the Sufis, to chant the most beautiful names of Allah in unison during religious gatherings. In Iraq,

⁹⁷ Editor’s Note: The use of the divine name *Rahman* may have meant to appeal to Jews, the Arab monotheists, known as the Hanif, and the southern Arabian Sabians. As Mansfield explains in *The Arab World: A Comprehensive History*, “By the fourth century AD the people of southern Arabia abandoned polytheism to adopt their own form of monotheism, a belief in a supreme god known as al-Rahman, ‘the Merciful’” (16). Interestingly enough, *Rahmana* is the Aramaic name for God used in the Babylonian Talmud. Compiled around 600, the work contains materials from the first couple of centuries CE (or perhaps even a tad before) in Hebrew. It also contains later material which is partially in Hebrew but largely in Aramaic. While it would not be worthwhile to count the Hebrew names of God in the Talmud since most of these would simply be in Biblical quotations, a search of the word *Rahmana* in Michael Carasik’s computerized concordance found 1,601 occurrences.

⁹⁸ Editor’s Note: When some irreligious Moroccan women are asked why they flaunt their beauty, appearing in public in sexually provocative clothing, they often cite this saying sarcastically to justify their Islamically-inappropriate demeanor.

people swear by Allah's most beautiful names, *wa haqq asma' Allahi al-husna* (Masliyah 89); by *al-Muhlik al-Mudrik*, the Destroyer, the Annihilator; by *al-Muhyi al-Mumit*, the One who revives the dead and causes death; by *alladhi yuhyi al-'izam*, the Reviver of Bones; by *al-Hayy al-Qayyum*, the Living, the Eternal; by *alladhi yaqdir 'ala kull shay'*, the One who is able to do all things; by *al-Sami'*; by *al-'Alim*, the Hearer, the Omniscient; by *Allah al-'Aziz*, by Allah, the Most Powerful; and by *Rabb al-'izzah*, the Lord of Power; by *Jalal Allah*, the Might of Allah; by *Rabb al-samawati wa al-ard*, the Lord of the heavens and the earth (90). Arabic-speaking Muslims employ the most beautiful names of Allah in various circumstances: *Ya Latif* [O Most Gracious] is typically used to express grief or fear; *Ya Rahman* [O Most Compassionate] and *Ya Rahim* [O Most Merciful] are typically used to implore mercy from the Almighty; *Ya Razzaq* [O Provider of Sustenance] is typically used when asking for sustenance and so forth.

Almighty Allah is called upon with such frequency that even these ninety- nine names do not suffice. In fact, religious leaders, led by their love for Allah, have made use of further divine names and descriptions, both implied and from the holy book. For Shi'ites, the foremost of these authors are the Imams from the Household of the Prophet. This is particularly the case with al-Husayn ibn 'Ali (d. 680) and his son 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin (d. 710?), who left us poignant testimonies to their sublime spirituality and divine devotion. The development of divine attributes was not merely the domain of the divines. Even average Arabic-speaking Muslims coined divine attributes which are not found among the beautiful names of Allah mentioned in the Qur'an including, for example, the Andalusian inscription *La ghalib illa Allah*, there is no Conqueror but Allah, which adorns many structures from al-Andalus or "Islamic Spain."⁹⁹ The most beautiful

⁹⁹ Editor's Note: Other, non-scriptural, oaths expressing veneration for Allah include *wa illi farraj asab 'ak*, by the One who differentiated between your fingers, *wa al-khallak timshi 'ala al-ga'*, by the One who made you walk on the ground, *wa lladhi jarra hadha al-ma'*, by the One who made this water flow, and *wa rabb al-ka'inat*, by the Lord of the creatures, among many more, all of which are used in Iraq (Masliyah 94). Piamenta also points to the following Divine Names which are not found *ad litteram* in the Scripture: *al-Da'im*, "The Everlasting", related to *al-Qayyum* and *al-Baqi*; *al-Sayyid*, "The Master;" al-Sultan, "The Absolute Ruler", and *al-Jamil*, "The Beautiful" (38-39). As al-Ghazali (d. 1111) explains in *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God*, "when an expression which does not suggest [any imperfection] at all among those who share a common understanding it is taken to be true of God, and when revelation does not expressly forbid it, then we freely permit its being applied to God" (181). The followers of *qiyyas* use logic and chose divine names by "analogy" with other established ones (De la Torre 22). This does not mean that the names are synonymous, but rather each name, in itself, brings a new shade of meaning of the divine essence (22). As al-Ghazali explains, "it is unlikely that the names included in the ninety-nine be synonymous since names are not intended for their letters or external differences, but rather for their meanings" (1999: 26). Purificación de la Torre further elucidates that, "Estos teólogos no descartan en absoluto el importante peso que el Corán y los hadices tienen a la hora de la elección de los Nombres, pero ellos añaden la posibilidad de aplicar la lógica para poder explicar el por qué de un Nombre u otro" (22) [These theologians do not downplay the

names are commonly used as personal names preceded by the word *‘Abd*, which means servant or slave, as encouraged by the following words of the Prophet, “Verily, the names most liked by Allah are ‘Abd Allah and ‘Abd al-Rahman” (Muslim). Regardless of where they live, most Muslims, be they Arabs or non-Arabs, bear Arabic names related to religion.¹⁰⁰

In the previous pages, we have covered some of the major Allah expressions. Evidently, the list we have provided can in no means be considered exhaustive as entire dictionaries or even encyclopedias would be required to adequately document the richness of the Allah Lexicon. The Allah expressions we have included establish a clear link between the Qur’an and the Sunnah and the Allah Lexicon and demonstrate the depth of the Islamic impact on Arabic identity, the issue we will now examine.

4. The Allah Lexicon and Identity

4.1 The Arabic Language and Identity

The Arabic language, the root of Islamic identity, is divided into two main varieties: classical or Modern Standard Arabic, the high variety, and colloquial Arabic, the low variety. Classical Arabic, known as *fushat al-turath*, is the traditional religious language used by Muslim scholars. It is the language of the Qur’an, static, frozen in time, and artificially maintained by the *‘ulama’*. Modern Standard Arabic, known as *fushat al-‘asr*, is the language of the educated elite. Based on classical Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic is a living literary language which includes some simplified grammatical forms for example, dropping the distinction between the two preterites and includes a modernized lexicon. With the exception of some minor differences in pronunciation, MSA is consistent throughout the Arabic world. Colloquial Arabic, known as *al-‘ammiyyah* or *al-darijah*, consists of the following major dialect groups: North African, known as *maghribi* or Western Arabic, and Levantine, known as Syrio-Palestinian or Eastern Arabic. Within colloquial Arabic, there are further subdivisions, such as *‘ammiyyat al-muthaqqafin*, the colloquial of the educated, and *‘ammiyyat al-mutanawwirin*, the colloquial of the basically educated, and *‘ammiyyat al-ummiyyin*, the colloquial of the illiterate (Holes 15). Further dialectal differences are due to geographic

important role the Qur’an and the *ahadith* have when it comes to selecting names, but they add the possibility of applying logic in order to explain the reason for one name or another]. The use of analogy was opposed by the partisans of *tawqif* who held that the only names of Allah are those which He has attributed to Himself ; in other words, the only acceptable names are those found in the Qur’an and the Sunnah (De la Torre 22)

¹⁰⁰ Editor’s Note: The significance of names in general, and Arabic names in particular, is addressed in our article “¿Qué hay en un nombre árabe?”

factors, the urban/rural dichotomy, and the role of religion. In Egypt, for example, Cairene Arabic differs from Southern Egyptian Arabic; and in Morocco, the dialect differs between the eastern and western regions. Considering the multiple levels of the language which are experienced as a continuous whole, the schematic label of “diglossia” is inadequate when applied to Arabic (14; Parkinson 72-73).

While dialectal differences are often attributed to education and social class, in the Arabic world, language also functions as a religious identifier. In Lebanon, for example, it is often possible to distinguish between Christians or Muslims on the basis of their language, through Christians’ insistence on using greetings such as *sabah al-khayr* and *masa’ al-khayr* as opposed to *al-salamu ‘alaykum* and their avoidance of the Allah Lexicon. In Morocco, Jewish people can be identified, among other things, on the basis of their pronunciation of the fricative *kha* in place of the laryngeally constricted gutturally aspirated *ha*. Iraqi Christians and Jews speak different dialects than Muslims do.¹⁰¹

Even among Muslims themselves, it is possible to determine if people are Sunni or Shi‘i based on dialectal differences, particularly related to the use of the Allah Lexicon. For example, when a Sunni hears the name of the Prophet, he responds with either *‘alayhi al-salam*, “upon him be peace,” or *salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa-sallam*, “blessings and peace be upon him.” The Shi‘ites, however, typically bless Muhammad as well as the Family of Muhammad with *salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam* or “peace and blessings be upon him and his Family.” When the name of ‘Ali is mentioned, Sunnis simply say *radiyya Allahu ‘anhu*, “may Allah be pleased with him,” or *karrama Allahu wajhahu*, “may Allah honor his face,” while Shi‘ites would typically say *‘alayhi al-salam*, “upon him be peace,” which equally applies to all members of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, the People of the House [of the Prophet]. The mention of controversial persons such as Abu Sufyan, Mu‘awiyah and Yazid might elicit a *radiyya Allahu ‘anhum* [may Allah be pleased with them] from some extremist Wahhabis, Deobandis and other *nawasib* or enemies of *Ahl al-Bayt*, but would likely result in a *la‘anahum Allah* [may Allah curse them] from a Shi‘ite.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Editor’s Note: In 1948, there were 135 to 150,000 Jews in Iraq. Up to 120,000 of them left the country in the early 1950s and most of the rest during the 1960s and 1970s. By 2003, there were only one to two hundred Jews left in Iraq, and many of those were relocated to Israel by American troops.

¹⁰² Editor’s Note: A good source of Shi‘ite curses is “Some Imami Shi‘i Views on the Sahabah” found in Etan Kohlberg’s *Belief and Law in Imami Shi‘ism*.

When the *adhan* is heard, Sunnis merely repeat its words. The Shi'ites do likewise but break out in moving chants of *Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammad wa 'ali Muhammad* or "O Allah, bless Muhammad and the Family of Muhammad." Shi'ites can also be recognized by their refusal to respond to *al-salamu 'alaykum*, for reasons of mourning, on the Day of 'Ashura and their own body of Allah expressions, including cursing the killers of Husayn (d. 680) upon drinking water, in the following words: *Salawatu Allahi 'ala al-Husayn wa ahli baytihi wa ashabihi wa la'natullahi 'ala qatalati al-Husayni wa a'da'ih* or "May Allah bless Husayn, his Family and his Companions, and curse those who killed Husayn and those who were pleased with it" (qtd. Bostani 99). Whether they are Sunnis, Shi'ites, Christians or Jews, the ability to identify the religious affiliation of an Arab can be as simple as asking a few indirect questions which might elicit the utilization of the Allah Lexicon. As such, it makes it exceedingly difficult for outsiders, however fluent they may be in the Arabic language, to pose as Arabs, as the Arabic language serves as an identity marker revealing national origin, class, education and religion.¹⁰³

4.2 The Allah Lexicon and Outsiders

Several scholars have studied politeness formulas and their uses among native and non-native Arabic speakers. In every case, their conclusions and concerns were the same: outsiders have difficulty absorbing the Allah Lexicon, fail to use it when required or do so incorrectly, a problem which is religious and cultural as much as linguistic. In Arabic, for example, the range of responses to compliments and favors is much vaster and more specific than it is in English.¹⁰⁴ One of the problems faced by non-native Arabic

¹⁰³ Editor's Note: In Nelson's study of Syrian and American speakers of Arabic living in Damascus, she found that "Syrian interlocutors frequently used religious expressions, whereas none of the Americans did so" (430 note 4). Regardless of their level of fluency in Arabic, the Americans will forever be identified as foreigners for failing to use phrases of faith.

Failure to use the proper Allah expression can be particularly perilous for unbelievers feigning to be Muslims. In one case, a non-Muslim from Kenya was captured by a Somali militia as a spy. Having heard that the Somalis do not kill Muslim captives, he insisted that he was Muslim. His captors asked him to say the *shahadah*. He responded by saying *al-salamu 'alaykum*, upon which he was killed. While the lack of *salam* can lead to slaughter, the *salam* can also save. In one case, a prisoner was being led to his execution. Upon passing the judge, he said *al-salamu 'alaykum*, upon which the judge automatically replied, *wa alaykum al-salam*. The prisoner commented: "How can you punish me if you have given me the greeting of peace?" Recognizing the binding nature of the *salam* salutation, the judge pardoned the prisoner.

The *salam* greeting, as simple as it may seem, is often inappropriately employed by some English-speaking Muslim converts. In fact, it is common for many of these new Muslims to send their salaams to any Muslim they come across. While this might work in North America, it does not come across well in big Arab cities where the greeting *al-salamu 'alaykum* is typically reserved for people one knows, and not complete strangers one encounters on the street, unless you wish to ask them a question.

speakers is generalization, failure to draw the contextually appropriate expression from the corpus of the Allah Lexicon, whereas an Egyptian, for example, “would probably use formulas which are more specific in content” (El-Sayed 11). At the root of this problem is the fact that “[b]ecause all these formulas emanate from Islamic Arabic culture, they do not have equivalents” in English (11). As Richard S. Harrell explains,

It is an important cultural pattern that compliments or words of praise should be

¹⁰⁴ Editor’s Note: It is evident that religious oaths are far more prevalent in Arabic than they are in English. While Salih and ‘Abdul-Fattah’s study on “English and Arabic Oath Speech Acts” does a fair job of comparing speech acts in both languages, it leaves readers with the erroneous impression that their frequency and function are similar. They claim that:

It has been shown unequivocally that American English and Jordanian Arabic have many oath features in common in terms of the function and theme or object of the oath. Individuals in both languages swear by the Deity or by one or two of His Supreme attributes. They may also swear by the holy prophets, saints, and angels as well as by their own supreme ideals and values which may differ from one culture to the other. There are, however, some differences which arise mainly from the somewhat different beliefs, cultural practices and social norms as well as family relations in each culture. (123).

According to the authors, American English and Jordanian Arabic have “many” oath features in common and only “some” differences based on “somewhat” different beliefs, practices and norms. Clearly, this is not the case. Arabic and English do share *some* common expressions; however, in most cases, they are used with a radically different sense. When Muslims call upon Allah or call upon the Prophet, it is perceived as an act of piety. When Christians call upon God or Jesus Christ, namely, when they “swear”, it is perceived pejoratively. From a frequency point of view, the evidence is in: the Arabic language employs the name *Allah* far more than the English language employs the word *God*. So, from a qualitative and quantitative point of view, the differences between Arabic and English religious expression far outnumber the similarities. Furthermore, the vast majority of Allah expressions are pragmatically untranslatable as they do not have equivalents in the English language. As Barbara Kryk has noted, interjections are highly language specific and lack exact equivalents across languages (195). In their study of 20 M.A. translation students on a translation task of 15 politeness formulas, Mohammad Farghal and Ahmed Borini found that “many student translators could not render appropriately the Arabic euphemistic formulas” (13) and that “[m]any student translators could not grasp the distinction between what is formulaic and non-formulaic. Hence, they have either maintained the Arabic formulaic expression or just paraphrased it into English” (16), “student translators often adopt literal translation as a solution when they encounter difficulty in translating any formula”, trying to “maintain the semantic import of the Arabic formula at the expense of the intended illocutionary force, which makes their renditions opaque and unintelligible to English readers” (16). As the authors explain,

Politeness formulas often tend to show some kind of divergence between the two languages in question. For instance, one very noticeable difference between English and Arabic formulas is the frequency of religious references in Arabic, while the corresponding polite formulas in English may not have such references. By way of illustration, a formula that may functionally correspond to English *Good bye* in Arabic is *Allah ma’ak* [May God be with you] in a variety of contexts. (5)

According to Farghal and Borini, a “deficiency in paralinguistic competence usually results in communication breakdown or, at least, distortion of the original message” (3). While a good translator could come up with an idiomatically acceptable replacement, the original sense of the expressions would almost always be lost.

Rare, indeed, are authors of the quality of Hergé, the Belgian author of the *Tintin* comic books, who, due to familiarity with Arabic culture, are capable of conveying Allah expressions in European languages like French. *Coke en stock* and *Le crabe aux pinces d’or*, among others, include Arab characters uttering *Par Allah* [By Allah], *Le salam sur toi* [Peace be upon you] and the tongue-in-cheek *Par la barbe du Prophète* [By the beard of the Prophet]. Despite his cross-cultural dexterity, even Hergé succumbs to the anti-Arab sentiment of his time, depicting Arabs as terrorists.

accompanied by a deferential reference to God. Without the reference to God, such statements appear crude, and in older, more traditional social circles, they are taken as bad omens which bring misfortune. References to God of this sort are usually not directly translatable into English. (352)

One of the fundamental differences between both languages is that in English the word “God” is usually restricted to either oaths, both profane and serious, or to formally serious situations (331). Arabic, on the other hand, “employs references to God and to religion in general, in a wide variety of everyday situations” (331). Oaths such as “I swear by the Glorious Qur’an / the Chapter of Ya-Sin / the Verse of the Chair” are unmatched in English and “[i]t is likely that native English-speakers will find them difficult to grasp” (Salih and ‘Abdul-Fattah 119). While similarities between some expressions are sure to be found, “[m]any of the Arabic formulas involve references to religious concepts, especially those that are culture-specific, whereas the corresponding English ones do not” (El-Sayed 11). El-Sayed notes that “[a] failure to grasp the often subtle differences between first language and target language formulas can lead to serious misunderstandings and misjudgments” (1) and “[w]hat is more dangerous is that the partial equivalence of two formulas in two languages may be mistaken for a total one” (7). Part of the problem lies in the fact that “adult second language performers seem to use politeness features before they have acquired their co-occurrence rules and appropriate variation” (4).¹⁰⁵ As a result, “[a]nalysis of politeness formulas needs to incorporate the set of rules and conventions governing the situations in which they can be used” (6). This also applies for compliments which are culture-specific objects. Ahmad ‘Aly Mursy and John Wilson are categorical that “any understanding of compliment behavior must take account of such things as values, tact, courtesy, and general group, as opposed to individual, values” (133). This may be because Islamic culture, as opposed to Western culture, places the interest of the group above the interest of the individual and values responsibilities and obligations to the community.

As many Allah phrases do not have equivalents in other languages, foreign speakers of Arabic must be cautioned about drawing upon first language formulas. As Davies explains, “[i]f an Arab language learner translates and uses his first language formula in the target language, the result may be a fairly inappropriate contribution to the

¹⁰⁵ Editor’s Note: An Arab, however, acquires Allah expressions over the course of a lifetime. A child learning the language “can be presumed to extend his repertory by analogy” (Ferguson 43). Having heard these expressions many times, “the speaker of Syrian Arabic has the competence to use the root-echo pattern in linguistic contexts where he has never heard it before” (43).

conversation, one which seems exaggerated or stylistically odd, or one which seems to make no sense at all” (80). The inappropriate use of the Allah Lexicon can lead to many problems. As Davies explains,

Learners with a good mastery of the pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary of a language may nevertheless be extremely unsuccessful in their interactions with native speakers of that language if they do not have some understanding of their norms of politeness; indeed, as would be the case with stylistic errors in general...it is likely that the more proficient learners are in other aspects, the greater will be the danger that their failure to use the appropriate strategies may be perceived, not as evidence of lack of proficiency, but rather as a sign of disrespect, hostility, or other negative attitudes. (76)

Davies warns Arabic students that: “a pair of similar formulas in two languages rarely turn out to be completely equivalent in all respects” (77). She also cautions that “a fixed formula in one language is not readily paired with any corresponding formula in another” (80). She explains that “the true significance of a formula is determined by a complex of cultural and social conventions and that the outsider should therefore be wary about misinterpreting it as evidence of the user’s personality or individual attitudes” (77). She cautions that “a feature which is perceived as courteous by speakers of one language may not be so judged by speakers of another” (77) and warns that “learners whose first language lacks a formula...risk being perceived as abrupt or impolite if they omit what is felt to be essential in the other language” (80). A simple use of *barakallahufik* in response to a trivial service might seem ironical or sarcastic instead of polite” since “In Moroccan Arabic...small gestures will typically not warrant thanks at all” (Davies 85). A mere *la* or no can be terribly rude in Arabic culture where the polite response to a request one cannot or will not grant is *Allah yu’tik* or “May Allah give you” based on the Qur’anic verse “And even if thou hast to turn away from them...speak to them a word of kindness” (17:28). You may not have given them what they want, but at least you gave them a blessing.¹⁰⁶ Non-native speakers can also encounter problems with greeting rituals. As Khalid S.A. Hassanain warns in his article “Saudi Mode of Greeting Rituals,” “[v]iolations of...social greeting rituals lead to undesired consequences or to a provocation of violence resulting in misunderstanding or misinterpreting of the verbal

¹⁰⁶ Editor’s Note: Islam prohibits begging. As the Prophet said, “Nothing but Paradise must be begged for Allah’s sake” (Abu Dawud). At the same time, Muslims are not supposed to turn away beggars, especially when they invoke the name of Almighty Allah, as they are encouraged to provide alms to the poor (2:196; 9:60).

and non-verbal behavior in the Saudi setting” (68).

The proper use of the Allah Lexicon is also particularly difficult to acquire due to the following factors: (1) the expressions are primarily of religious origin and require an understanding of Islam, the Qur’an and the Sunnah; (2) “the Arabic sequences are much longer than the English; they contain more words and are more likely to continue beyond the initial compliment and corresponding response” since “the longer the interaction, the greater the sincerity” (Nelson 429-30); (3) “the sociolinguistic aspects of discourse are extremely difficult for non-native speakers to acquire on their own” (Schmidt 69) and (4) “few courses provide specifications of how, when, and where to use the formulas” (Davies 77).

4.3 Politics and Polemics: The Allah Lexicon in France

Language scholars and teachers throughout much of the world have come to comprehend that the understanding of foreign cultures and peoples is an essential part of language learning and that “language cannot meaningfully be studied in isolation from context and culture” (Emery 196). In France, however, the opposite is true, with French teachers of Arabic addressing what seems to be an unsolvable issue: how to teach secular Arabic, how to teach Arabic without directly dealing with Islam. According to Paul Balta, “[e]nseigner l’arabe, ce n’est pas aller contre la laïcité” (123) [teaching Arabic does not go against secularism]. He admits that “[l]’Islam est un élément incontournable dans l’apprentissage de cette langue, mais il est possible de l’aborder d’une manière laïque” (123) [Islam is an unavoidable element in learning this language, but it is possible to deal with it in a secular manner]. According to Balta, “Si l’école n’offre pas la possibilité d’apprendre l’arabe, les familles se retournent alors vers les associations, souvent d’inspiration religieuse, qui sont encore plus difficiles à contrôler” (123) [If public schools do not offer the possibility of learning Arabic, parents turn to associations, often of religious inspiration, which are even more difficult to control]. In his view, when Muslim youth feel that the system seeks to take away their culture, “ils se culpabilisent et se radicalisent” (122) [they become guilt ridden and radicalize themselves].¹⁰⁷ As such, he greatly encourages the French government to provide Arabic language instruction at all levels, from elementary school to university. In doing so, of course, “L’arabe ne doit pas être considéré comme langue religieuse” (123) [Arabic must not be considered as a

¹⁰⁷ Editor’s Note: Peter Manderville echoes this view, explaining that “[t]here is a point beyond which discrimination and rejection by the majority society results not in Muslims’ denial of their religion, but rather in its affirmation. Rejected and unwanted, they turn to that which sets them apart as a form of cultural self-assertion and a basis of identity. Islam also becomes a form of self-defense and a source of solidarity against a hostile dominant culture” (22).

religious language]. He feels that if the teaching of Arabic was valued as part of the national educational system, “elle pourrait être un instrument puissant de laïcité et d’intégration” (123) [it could be a powerful instrument encouraging secularism and integration]. He presumes that if the state feigns support for the Islamic culture of the students, they would not feel the need to use religious symbols like the *hijab* to express their differences. Not only should Arabic be a means of Muslim control in France, Balta wishes to export it abroad. As he explains

Quant aux pays de l’Afrique noire, demandeurs de professeurs d’arabe, la France n’a-t-elle pas intérêt à leur fournir plutôt que les laisser recruter ailleurs des enseignants parfois médiocres et souvent influencés par une idéologie intégriste: la méthode de l’école française des arabisants est aussi un moyen de former les esprits. (119)

[Is it not in the interest of France to provide Arabic instructors to black African countries which are in need of them? Is it not better than letting them recruit instructors from abroad who are often mediocre and influenced by the fundamentalist ideology? The approach of the French School is also a means of building minds.]

Balta does not hide “the French Solution” to “the Muslim Problem.” When asked whether a secular Islam will be born in Western Europe, he explains that a new generation of secular Muslim intellectuals can serve as an example and “préparer l’ère post-islamiste” (330) [prepare the post-Islamist era]. This would permit Muslims to continue, if they wish, to practice their religion within the confines of secular republicanism while ensuring that nothing stops them from discontinuing to believe or to change their beliefs (330).

Linda Hamoud’s article, “Télévision et religion en cours d’arabe,” further exposes the French attempt to subvert Islam through Arabic language instruction. Hamoud readily admits that “il existe un véritable problème dès que l’on parle de religion en cours de langue arabe” [there is a real problem once one speaks of religion in an Arabic language class] (67). The problem with teaching Arabic, she notes, is that it arouses interest in Islam. As she explains,

Ce problème tient au fait que les interrogations des élèves, dès la classe de sixième, concernant la religion musulmane sont fréquentes et insistantes auprès du professeur d’arabe. Dans le cadre de l’école républicaine et laïque, qui est en concurrence directe avec l’enseignement de la langue arabe dispensée dans les

mosquées, la parole de l'enseignant sur les sujets religieux entre en conflit direct avec la parole de l'Imam. En effet, celui-ci possède une légitimité naturelle pour ce type de sujets, et du coup, le professeur arabisant se trouve souvent désarmé face aux interrogations de ses élèves. (68)

[The problem revolves around the fact that from sixth grade and up the questions of students concerning the Muslim religion made to the Arabic teacher are frequent and persistent. In the context of a republican secular school system, which finds itself in direct competition with the Arabic language instruction provided by mosques, the opinions of the teacher regarding religious subjects comes into direct conflict with the teachings of the Imam. In fact, he has a natural authority on these types of subjects and, as a result, Arabic instructors find themselves unprepared to respond to students' questions.]

The solution to this problem, according to Hamoud, is to use and diffuse: to deal with a religious sequence from Arabic television, addressing and analyzing images and elements so that students “évitent de recevoir le discours religieux ‘en pleine figure’” [avoid getting hit in the face with the religious message] (68). The goal, she explains, is “montrer aux élèves que l'intertextualité va au-delà de la parole prononcée par le Cheikh” [to show students that intertextuality goes beyond the words pronounced by the Shaykh] (69). Hamoud explains that religious discourse is based on “les émotions et rarement la raison humaine” [emotions and rarely on human reason] (69) which is why it should be avoided. The pedagogical objective of this approach is not really the analysis of words but contextualization of cultural references (69). In short, the French policy with regard to the Islamic presence in the Arabic language and culture is to deflect it in an attempt to create a psychological break between Arabic and Islam, an approach which may contribute to Arabic language attrition, a problem facing Arabic-speaking Muslims living outside of the Arabic-Islamic world.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Editor's Note: In their study on “Lebanese Immigrants in Australia”, a survey of the language maintenance, erosion, and attrition rate of 62 immigrant children from Melbourne, Ronald Taft and Desmond Cahill found that while most of the subjects could speak Lebanese Arabic well, few could read or write it (129). This problem was further accentuated by the fact that most of the parents were either illiterate or semi-literate in Arabic: “only 47% of the fathers and 31% of the mothers could read it ‘well,’ only a quarter of the parents could write it ‘well’” (134); and the alarming “absence of printed material in the language in most homes” (142) making it “virtually impossible for the children to develop literacy skills in other than English” (142). As a result, “English was clearly the dominant language of the children” (141) and “one third of the children have virtually no ‘loyalty’ to their mother tongue” (136). The most detrimental factor in the language development of the children was found to be illiterate mothers: “[t]he children of completely illiterate mothers--in any language--were inferior in all language skills, but especially in speaking” (139), which should serve as a warning that the inclination of some Arab men towards taking ignorant women as wives places the Islamic identity of their children in peril. Although Muslim children represented only 14%

The opinions expressed by the likes of Paul Balta and Linda Hamoud, both of whom are secular Christian Arabs, are perfectly in line with France's fundamentalist secular philosophy, in which there is no place for the Islamic religion in public schools, no place for Islam in the Arabic language, and no place for the *hijab* on the heads of Muslim girls.¹⁰⁹ It is clear that the secular French have little tolerance for diversity, are afraid of Islam, and wish to undermine it by all means, by prohibiting the Islamic headdress and by attempting to purge the Arabic language of its integral religious

of the subjects, the rest being Orthodox (12%) and Catholic (69%), with 4% refusing to identify their religion, it can be safely said that, in terms of language loss, what applies to the Christian Lebanese also applies to the Muslim, but to a lesser extent.

In his study of two Arab communities in New York, a Muslim Yemeni one and a Christian Lebanese one, Dweik found that second-generation Yemeni immigrants were successful in maintaining their native language. He attributes this retention to their high commitment to Islam as well as the Arabic language through a sense of sacredness resulting from the bond between language and religion. In contrast, Dweik found that second-generation Christian Lebanese had abandoned Arabic for English.

While Lebanese Christian immigrants may, over the course of couple of generations, entirely lose their Arabic, they will not lose their religion as they are in a predominantly Christian environment. It may be interesting to note here that it is not uncommon to meet Christian Lebanese who do not think of themselves as Arab at all, but rather Franks or even Phoenicians, etc. This is in great part due to the deep-seated distinction Aramaeans-Christians and Arab-Muslims made for themselves during Islam's first thrust into the Levant, centuries ago. For the Muslims, the loss of the Arabic language sends them on a downwards spiral of decay away from their Islam. Since Muslims are the majority of the population in Lebanon and exert considerable influence, being illiterate in the homeland does not necessarily pose a threat to one's religious identity, which is absorbed through osmosis in an Islamic cultural setting. In a non-Muslim country, however, illiteracy in Arabic leads to loss of language, culture and religion. In the United States, the rate of dissimilation from Arabic heritage and assimilation into American culture is even more severe. Case in point: Ghazi Shorrah's study of 28 Arab immigrant families in Buffalo, New York, "clearly demonstrate the children's inclination toward utilizing English and the rejection of Arabic" (83).

In his study of 58 Arab-American students attending a full-time private Arabic-Islamic school in Dallas, Texas, 'Abdel Fattah Bani Hani found that "[t]he reduction in the use of Arabic is illustrated by a mean average of 2.79 on a 5-point Likert scale for the use of Arabic at home, and a mean average of 2.82 on a 5-point Likert scale for the use of Arabic with friends" (168). In simple terms, if parents speak Arabic to their children 100% of the time, their children will speak it 50% of the time and their grandchildren 0% of the time. While many factors are at play, his data demonstrates that:

children who have a stronger belief in the Islamic faith and who show more commitment to Islam through preserving the daily prayers and other religious practices tend to use English substitutes less often and are hence considered more fluent in their native language than children who report a weaker belief in Islam and in the connection between Islam and Arabic, and who report less commitment to preserving Islamic practices. (97)

Moreover, "the results illustrate that more usage of Arabic at home is associated with a higher level of children's commitment to their religion and less usage of Arabic at home is associated with a lower level of children's commitment to Islam" (104).

As 'Abdo A. Elkholy has stated in *The Arab Moslems in the United States*, "The Arabic language is an inseparable part of Islam" (qtd. in Turner Medhi 109). The loss of Arabic leads to the loss of Islam. Arabic-speaking Muslims have quite a challenge in front of them if they wish to preserve their language, culture, and religion. As Beverlee Turner Mehdi has observed, Arabs are characterized by the fact that "they have so easily assimilated" into American and Western culture (viii).

¹⁰⁹ Editor's Note: We have discussed the antagonist attitude of the French government towards Muslims in our article "The Future of the French Language in Light of French Anti-Islamism."

expressions, the very Islamic heritage being passed on through Arabic instruction delivered in mosques which is seen as a threat to the teaching of secular Arabic. When faced with the “Muslim Problem,” the French strategy is one of mind control, double speak, cultural colonialism, and ideological imperialism.

The difficulty of learning the Allah Lexicon and the degree to which a foreign speaker wishes to use it have also been addressed by several scholars. To put it plainly, “[t]he question of to what extent learners of a language should also learn to adopt the socio-cultural conventions of its speakers is a delicate one” (Davies 82). According to Davies, “[c]ompromises are often possible; when two alternative formulas exist, learners can select the one which most corresponds to their own outlook, and certain non-obligatory formulas can be avoided” (82). While this may be the case in some rare instances, such compromises are few and far between. From an Islamic standpoint, a mere *shukran* is insufficient when responding to a compliment or thanking someone for a favor or service. From an Arabic standpoint, the same applies. As Nelson has shown, Arabic-speaking Americans living in Syria are much more likely than Syrians to use Appreciation Tokens [e.g. thanks] in responding to compliments (429). However, “[t]he infrequency of this response in the Arabic data suggest that the utterance *shukran* [‘thank you’] by itself is not usually a sufficient response to an Arabic compliment and needs to be supplemented by additional words” (Nelson 429). Ferguson’s study on “God-wishes in Syrian Arabic” also debunks the idea of compromise. According to his research:

the pattern of polite health inquiry in Syrian Arabic consists of (a) an initiating formula which is one of a set that has the lexical meaning of “how are you?,” “how is your health?,” to which there is (b) an obligatory response which is one of a set of God wishes and other God expressions that may optimally be accompanied by an expression of good health. (76)

In order to avoid any possible misunderstandings, Nelson advises students of the Arabic language to learn the more extended kinds of Arabic responses (429). In effect, “[t]o achieve pragmatic competence in Arabic, American students of Arabic need to learn the specific formulas used in responding to compliments on particular attributes” (429). For Desmond, the question is clear: “It is impossible for a Westerner to speak Arabic with any fluency without becoming arabized to a certain extent” (14). Considering that the Allah Lexicon is so inextricably associated with an Islamic identity, it seems unlikely that the *ajanib* or outsiders would be able or even willing to acquire it and much less likely that they could capture the subtleties encountered therein unless they embraced Islam,

studied its sources, and immersed themselves in Arabic-Islamic culture for an extended period of time.

4.4 Inside the Allah Lexicon

While Arabs can make claims to their colloquial dialects, they cannot make claims to classical Arabic. As Berque explains, “[t]he *lughah* is nobody’s mother tongue. It is acquired through the study of great writings and the greatest of them all, the Qur’an” (190). Just as all Muslims are equal before Allah, they are all equal before the language of Allah and all can have access to the Allah Lexicon, in accord with their linguistic level and degree of initiation into Islam.

The Allah Lexicon is a religious code of communication with multiple layers of manifestation, increasing in complexity and sophistication in accord with the degree of Islamic erudition of its speakers, ranging from an illiterate Arab with vague notions of the Qur’anic source of his Allah sayings to the greatest leaders of Islam who use them to express a specific sense in its most subtle shades.¹¹⁰ When addressed, the Twelve Imams of the Household of the Prophet would often respond with Qur’anic quotes and allusions. Their perfect mastery of the Qur’an manifested itself in their daily discourse and was even absorbed by their servants and slaves. One remarkable case was that of Fiddah, the Abyssinian housemaid of the Prophet’s daughter, Fatimah al-Zahra’ (d. 631-32) and her

¹¹⁰ Editor’s Note: This would include the Fourteen Infallibles, the Prophet Muhammad, his daughter Fatimah (d. 631-32) and the Twelve Imams who spoke a special language all to their own. As Imam Khomeini pointed out, “The *ma’sumin*...also have their own language, and we must examine the language of each of the other four groups [the philosophers, the mystics, the jurists and the poets] to see which is the closest to the language of the *ma’sumin* and also to that of the Qur’an” (416). Whether it is philosophy, mysticism, jurisprudence or poetry, in Islam, each specialized language must trace back to the Qur’an. As Nwyia explains,

Si cela est vrai en art ou en philosophie, ce l’est encore plus en Islam, ou, précisément, la conscience religieuse ne prend naissance que pour autant qu’elle assimile un langage déterminé, celui-la même que lui fournit le Coran. En Islam, on le sait, tout part du Coran et tout doit ramener au Coran, et ce qui n’est pas tel est une nouveauté suspecte, sinon une infidélité inadmissible. C’est donc dans le Coran que prend naissance l’expérience mystique musulmane, et aussi technique qu’il soit ou qu’il le devienne, ce langage devra d’une manière ou d’une autre faire preuve de son origine coranique, sinon quant à sa forme, du moins dans son contenu (22).

[If it is true in art or in philosophy, it is even more so in Islam where, precisely, religious consciousness only develops by assimilating a determined language, the very one provided by the Qur’an. In Islam, as we know, everything comes from the Qur’an and everything must trace back to the Qur’an; that which does not is a suspicious innovation if not an unacceptable expression of infidelity. It is in the Qur’an, then, that the Muslim mystical experience comes to life. Regardless of how technical it is or it becomes, this language must, in one way or another, demonstrate its Qur’anic origin, if not in its form then in its content.]

The Allah Lexicon, as a specialized language, traces back to the Qur’an in both content and form. As Stewart has noted, some of the paired phrases of cognate curses exhibit near-rhyme, an artistic speech which is common in the Qur’an (336).

children, who was so marked by the spirituality which surrounded her that she spoke nothing but verses from the Qur'an.¹¹¹ Another similar case is related in *Bihar al-Anwar* regarding a slave girl of Imam 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin (d. 710?) who accidentally dropped a pot and struck him in the face, cutting him. He turned towards her and the slave girl said: "Allah says: 'those who restrain their rage.'" He said: "I have restrained my rage." She said: "And pardon the people." He said: "Allah has pardoned you." She said: "And Allah loves the good-doers" (3:134) to which he replied, "Go. You are a free woman" (Chittick 13). To the uninitiated, this exchange may not seem special; however, to those who are well-versed in the Muslim Scripture, it is most impressive as the slave girl was speaking straight from the Qur'an, showing that the Allah Lexicon serves both manifest and latent

¹¹¹ Editor's Note: The following dialogue between Fiddah and 'Abdullah bin al-Mubarak is found in the following sources: al-Qushayri's *Risalah*, Majlisi's *Bihar al-Anwar*, and Ibn Shahrashub's *Manaqib al Abi Talib*:

I saw a woman passing through the desert who had fallen behind the caravan. I asked her: "Who are you and where are you from?" She said: "Say *salam!*... 'Soon shall ye know it'" (6:67). I learned that she expected me to say *al-salamu 'alaykum* prior to asking questions. I did as she reminded and inquired why she was in this desert. She answered: "And such as Allah doth guide there can be none to lead astray" (39:37). I gathered that she had been left behind and was restless, so I asked again: "Are you a human being or jinn?" She replied: "O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer" (7:31). I discovered that she was a human being, so I continued my enquiry, "Where are you coming from?" She said: "They are being called from a place far distant" (41:44). I found out that she was coming from a place far off and inquired her destination. She immediately responded: "Pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to Allah" (3:97). I realized that she was performing the Pilgrimage and asked her how many days she had been travelling? She told me: "We created the heavens and the earth and all between them in six days" (7:54; 50:38). I concluded that it had been six days. I offered her food and water if she was so inclined. She politely indicated: "Nor did We give them bodies that ate no food, nor were they exempt from death" (21:8). She accepted my refreshment. Then to catch the caravan, I suggested to her that she make haste. She reminded me again: "On no soul doth Allah place a burden greater than it can bear" (2:286). I told her that if she could not do so that she could ride on the back of my camel behind me. She recited another Qur'anic Verse: "If there were, in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides Allah, there would have been confusion in both" (21:22). It was a pious reminder that unmarried men and women were forbidden from riding together on the same animal. [Qashiri says that he got down and requested her to ride the camel.] She occupied the seat and recited: "Glory be to Him who has subjected these [animals] to our (use)" (43:13). She thanked Allah who brought the animal under her control. When we reached the caravan, I asked her: "Do you know any one among them?" She recounted: "O Dawud! We did indeed make thee a vicegerent on earth" (38:26); "And Muhammad is no more than a Messenger" (3:144); "O Yahya! Take hold of the Book with might!" (19:12); "O Musa! Verily I am Allah, Exalted in Might, the Wise!" (27:9). I understood that Dawud, Muhammad, Yahya and Musa were the names of her sons. When the boys appeared, I asked her who they were. She said in her habitual manner: "Wealth and sons are allurements of the life of this world" (18:46). I recognized them as her sons. The woman looked at her sons with the feeling of contentment and uttered "O my father! Engage him on wages: truly the best of men for thee to employ is the one who is strong and trustworthy" (28:26). With these words from the Qur'an, she informed her sons that "This man offered me a help, so verily, 'Allah giveth manifold increase to whom He pleaseth'" (2:261). The sons grasped their mother's indications, and so they paid me twice as much as I ought to have been paid. To satisfy my curiosity I asked the sons: "Who is this honorable Lady that speaks nothing but the Qur'an?" They responded that she was their mother, the housemaid of Hadrat Fatimah al-Zahra', the daughter of the Holy Prophet and the Wife of Amir al-Mu'minin. She was raised under the shade of supreme knowledge and piety of the daughter of the Prophet. For the past twenty years, she has spoken nothing but the Qur'an in her daily conversations.

functions in the Arabic language. So moved was the Imam by her Qur'anic quotes that he set her free. On another occasion, a man cursed the Imam to his face, but he merely ignored him. Then the man shouted: "I mean you!" The Imam replied: "And from you I am turning away," alluding to the Qur'anic verse "Hold to forgiveness; command what is right; but turn away from the ignorant" (7:199) (Chittick 16). Among devout Muslims, the love for the Qur'an is so great that they wish to memorize it so that it becomes part of them; they seek to become saturated with its spirituality and to emulate the Prophet who was described by 'Aishah, one of his wives, as "The walking Qur'an," that is, the very embodiment and personification of Islamic ethics.

4.5 The Allah Lexicon under Attack

The Arabs, as Hourani explains, are "more conscious of their language than any people in the world" (1). While the Arabs were proud of their language in pre-Islamic times, producing pearls of poetry, the reality of the Qur'anic revelation is the reason for the prestige it now possesses. As Desmond describes,

The Arabic language ... is more than the unifying bond of the Arab world; it also shapes and molds that world. Like other languages, it carries within it a whole series of built-in judgements and attitudes. Since it is the language of the Qur'an and Muhammad, the Prophet of God, it has an even greater effect on its speakers than other languages have on their speakers. (14)

In the Arabic Muslim world, both the Arabic language and the Islamic religion are often viewed as inseparable parts of the same Arab Muslim identity, a fact which has been readily understood by those who seek to undermine it.¹¹²

With the fall of Granada in 1492, the "Muslim Question," needed to be addressed. What was to be done with the millions of Muslims in Spain? The answer came quickly: forced conversion to Catholicism through the destruction of everything related to the Islamic identity. This left Muslims with two choices: leave Spain or practice pious dissimulation or *taqiyyah* (Watt 182). Among the prohibitions enacted were bans on Islamic dress, ritual baths, prayers and fasting, the pilgrimage to Makkah, and paying *zakah*. At the fore, however, was the prohibition to either speak or write Arabic, for which the penalties were severe: "thirty days in prison in chains for the first offense, double the sentence for the second offense, and for the third offense men were given a

¹¹² Editor's Note: For more on language as it relates to foreign policy, see our following articles: "*Amoo Sam beh madreseh miravad*: Defense Language Institute Program as an Indicator of U.S Foreign Policy;" "El idioma árabe en camino de convertirse en un arma contra el Islam", and "La enseñanza de idiomas y la política exterior."

hundred lashes and four years in the galleys while women and youths under seventeen were given four years in prison” (Thomson 295). The persecution of cryptic Muslims was so severe that “[t]he parents could not even afford to say *Allah* in the presence of young children,” who were kept ignorant of Islam at least until the age of reason, for fear that a childish indiscretion might betray the whole family (284). Severed from Arabic, the secret Muslims were cut off from the Qur’an. While they lost their language, the Moriscos retained the Arabic script for writing in Spanish, a mark of the religious significance of the script and their determination to affirm their cultural identity as Muslims (López-Morillas 17). With time, however, the knowledge of the Arabic script was also lost. The only thing that remained in their hearts was a silent affirmation of *La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadun Rasulu Allah*, without knowing experientially the meaning of what they secretly believed (Thomson 285). Due to this loss of experiential knowledge over the generations, the knowledge of Islam among these secret Muslims became severely limited, facilitating their gradual assimilation into Catholicism and the eventual elimination of Islam in Spain.¹¹³

This same desire to eliminate Islam through the elimination of Arabic was demonstrated by Western powers when they colonized the Arabic Islamic world. According to Darwish al-Jundi, “The imperialists...were aware of the influence of the Arabic language...They fought it and tried to replace it with their own languages. They also attempted to develop colloquial and regional dialects, hoping thereby to stamp out classical Arabic” (Laffin 67-68). In most Arabic-speaking countries, some secularized politicians or writers have advocated converting the regional dialect into the official language and relegating classical Arabic to ruin. In every case, this has failed, due in large part to a profound Arabic-Islamic identity.

In non-Arab countries, where the bond to the Qur’an was limited to similarities in script and language differences made access to its significance more difficult, efforts to further distance Muslims from their scripture have been more successful. In Turkey, for example, Kemal Atatürk eliminated the Arabic alphabet and replaced it with a Latin-based one, effectively ensuring that future generations of Turks would not be able to read the Qur’an in its original Arabic without the substantial effort required to learn the script.¹¹⁴ In Iran, the Shah commenced a campaign to “purge” the Persian language from

¹¹³ Editor’s Note: The last Moriscos disappeared from Spain in the 1800s. Unlike their cousins of the Jewish faith who have been persecuted since ancient times, Muslims have not developed the same resilience and skills required to survive in times of genocide.

Arabic loan-words and planned to replace the Persian alphabet, of Arabic origin, with the Latin one.¹¹⁵ His attempt to attack the Arabic script was viewed as an attempt to alienate the Iranians from the Qur'an and played a role in his overthrow in the Islamic Revolution of Iran. In some of the ex-Soviet republics in Central Asia, a struggle is underway between Turkey, advocating the use of the Latin-based alphabet and Iran, advocating the use of the Arabic-Persian alphabet, as replacements for Russian Cyrillic. Both Turkey and Iran are vying for influence and to draw these countries into their spheres of political and, in the case of Iran, religious influence. The importance of the Arabic script extends far beyond the mere representation of a given set of sounds by a particular set of letters (López-Morillas 18).¹¹⁶ Whether it's Morisco Spanish, Persian, Ottoman Turkish or Urdu, the "use of the Arabic alphabet brings with it a considerable degree of Arabization

¹¹⁴ Editor's Note: Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938), the Turkish soldier and statesman, was the founder and first president of the Republic of Turkey. He contributed to the destruction of the Ottoman Empire and abolished the Caliphate in 1924. As a result, Islam ceased to be a political force in the world. He closed theological schools and replaced the *shari'ah* with a law code based on the Swiss legal code, the German penal code, and the Italian commerce code. He outlawed traditional Islamic headdress for men and insisted that all Turks wear European style hats, executing hundreds of pious Muslims to make the point. He banned the *hijab* and encouraged women to wear western dress and enter the work force. In 1928, in an effort to distance the people from the Qur'an, the government decreed that the Arabic script was to be replaced by a modified Latin alphabet. All citizens from six to 40 years of age were obliged to attend school to learn the new alphabet. The Turkish language was "purified" by the removal of Arabic and Persian words and replaced by new Turkish ones. He even obliged the muezzins to make the call to prayer in Turkish as opposed to Arabic. Mustafa Kemal opened art schools so that boys and girls could engage in the visual representation of human forms, which had been banned during Ottoman times. Atatürk, who was most fond of the national liquor, *raki*, and consumed vast quantities of it, legalized alcohol which is strictly forbidden in Islam. In 1934, he required all Turks to adopt western style surnames. Ironically, after waging war against the Turkish culture and religion, he adopted the name Kemal Atatürk meaning "father of the Turks." He died in 1938 of cirrhosis of the liver, the result of years of excessive drinking. He left Turkey with a divided identity, trapped between East and West, Europeanized but not quite European, alienated from the Islamic world but still a Muslim country.

¹¹⁵ Editor's Note: The attempt to purify the Persian language of Arabic loan-words and replace the Arabic-based Persian alphabet with the Latin one was part of the Shah's "white revolution." The Shah may have been inspired by earlier efforts by Ahmad Kasravi, a Persian historian who lived between 1888 and 1945. In a series of polemical works, including *Sufigari* and *Shiagari*, he attacked both Sufism and Shi'ism, accusing them of being sources of superstition and backwardness. He also attempted to promote a "Pure Persian", replacing words of Arabic origin with others he invented (Mutahhari, Tabataba'i, and Khumayni 192). Despite being a good writer, Kasravi became arrogant and went to the extreme of calling himself a prophet (184) and attempting to spread a pseudo-religion called Pak-Din, the Pure Religion (192). He was assassinated by Navvab Safavi, founder of *Fidayan Islam*, an organization which sought to establish an Islamic political constitution in Iran (192). Like the Shah of Iran, Spanish royalty also attempted to replace Arabic loan words with Latin ones. Despite such efforts, thousands of Arabic words remain in the Spanish language, representing 8% of its lexicon.

¹¹⁶ Editor's Note: Surprisingly, this seems to have escaped Ayatullah Mutahhari, who when confronted with the proposal to change the Persian script to the Latin one, claimed that Islam does not have one alphabet in particular and that "A los ojos del Islam, que es una religión universal, todos los alfabetos son iguales" (76) [In the eyes of Islam, a universal religion, all alphabets are equal]. He did, however, express some concern as to the effect the change in script might have on Muslim society and whether it would result in cultural alienation, considering that Persian scientific and Islamic literature has used an Arabic-based alphabet for 14 centuries (76-77). He also called for an investigation into who was behind the proposal and how it would be implemented, indicating that he may have harbored some suspicions regarding the matter.

and Islamicization of the original languages” (18). Muslims in the Indian subcontinent have been very conscious of this fact. Since Urdu, in its written form, used the Arabic-Persian alphabet, it is perceived with great symbolic importance. As a result, the educated Muslim elite have viewed any opposition to the use of the Urdu script as a threat not only to their professional positions but also to Islamic culture in general (Minault 456).

According to various sources, the Allah Lexicon appears to be under attack by both malevolent and benign forces. In the case of France, a deliberate campaign of cultural imperialism is being waged against the Allah Lexicon. In the Middle East, the Allah Lexicon is facing challenges posed by Western popular culture by means of television, movies, and music. As Ferguson has pointed out with regards to Syria, the younger generation’s reduced use of Arabic politeness formulas, both in terms of formulas and complexity of patterns, may be attributed to urbanization and secularization, as well as European and American influence (1983: 68). The Arabic language is undergoing a radical reduction in the use of Islamic, Allah-centric, expressions, which are being supplanted by simplified forms based on English and French norms.¹¹⁷ The situation is accentuated in the Western world where a decline in the use of Allah expressions is observed among Arabic-speaking Muslims. While natural issues of language transfer and acquisition may account for the omission of Allah phrases, one must consider what that lack means in terms of religious bonds. In point of fact, the missing phrases and expletives from the Allah Lexicon mean that speakers are in limited contact with the Divine, a devastating blow when one considers that Allah and Islam are the basis of Arabic-Islamic identity. Whether at home or abroad, the “occidentosis” of Jalal Al-i Ahmad and the “Westoxication” of ‘Ali Shariati seem stronger than ever, especially taken in the context of events subsequent to 9/11.

5. Conclusions

In the previous pages we have examined a small but representative number of Allah expressions drawn from the Qur’an and the Sunnah. From the thousands of Allah expressions contained in the Qur’an, cited by the Prophet, expounded upon by the *awliya*’ [“saints”] and the *‘ulama*’ [scholars], and enriched by the oral and literary tradition, the Allah Lexicon has grown exponentially, far surpassing what is contained in

¹¹⁷ Editor’s Note: As Ferguson has observed, “the profusion of thank yous, good wishes, and the like of Arabic society is being reduced to the models of French and English usage” (68). In many large Arabic cities, the greeting *al-salamu ‘alaykum*, the very symbol of Islam, is sometimes viewed with contempt and its speaker dismissed as an *arubi*, a backwards peasant, by “sophisticated” Westernized Arabs who employ “Allo”, “Bonjour”, “Hi”, and “Hello.”

the Qur'anic and Prophetic corpus. Not just a convention, the Allah Lexicon is a conviction, a living, vibrant body of unique expressions indicative of the vitality of the Islamic faith and the centrality of *al-tawhid*, or divine unity, in Arabic-Islamic culture and civilization.

Whether Arabic-speaking Muslims are more “religious” than other Muslims is not at issue, merely the core level of accommodation the language made to the religion under the auspices of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers. It is difficult to image the campaign they must have put forth to win over an entire language and largely transform it. This study on the history of the lexicon has presented a hitherto unexplored view of the power and insight of the Prophet and his ability to see beyond the obvious features of religious belief to its possible impact on daily life and speech, placing him at a higher level of influence than has otherwise been recognized by the non-Muslims of the world particularly. Far from a final study, this chapter marks an initial exploration into the oceanic depths of the Allah Lexicon where countless treasures can be found.

Chapter 11

Strategic Compromise in Islam¹¹⁸

The American invasion and occupation of Iraq posed a question of vital importance to Iraqi Shi'ites: to fight or not to fight? While Baathist loyalists, Wahhabi extremists, and some Shi'ite fringe groups have resorted to violence and terrorism, the Shi'ite community deferred the decision to its religious leaders, led by Grand Ayatullah Sayyid 'Ali al-Husayni al-Sistani, and the response was a resounding “no.” While this passive, quietist, approach may displease the likes of firebrand clerics like Muqtada Sadr and his followers, it is a mature, responsible approach, deeply-rooted in faith and a profound understanding of strategic compromise in Islam.

When the early Muslims were in a position of weakness, the Prophet Muhammad saw himself obliged to sign the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, to the objection of companions like 'Umar ibn al-Khattab who found the terms humiliating. The Prophet, however, understood that the Muslims were few and feeble and that they needed time to regroup, rebuild and grow stronger. He knew that he was not in a position of strength, did not have

¹¹⁸ This article was originally published in *Al-Bawaba: The Middle East Gateway* on August 4th, 2004. It was subsequently picked up by the wire, and reproduced world-wide in numerous media sources. As *Al-Bawaba* does not archive its articles, “Strategic Compromise” is no longer available on its website. Hence, we are pleased to reproduce it in this more permanent medium for the sake of posterity.

the upper hand, and needed to compromise. Muslims have much to learn from the Prophet's diplomacy.

When Imam 'Ali's Caliphate was usurped on three occasions, he did not respond with the sword, but with silence and patience. The Imam understood that a civil war in the early days of the Islamic movement, when Muslims were surrounded by hostile enemies on all fronts, could very well lead to the annihilation of Islam. His weapons were *taqiyyah* [pious dissimulation] and withdrawal from public affairs. As a result of these actions, many Muslims became keenly aware that there was something seriously wrong with the system. The Imam's apparent inaction was in fact the wisest and most effective of action through which he called into question the legitimacy and undermined the authority of the opportunistic rulers. Even after obtaining power, he was always reluctant to wage war against misguided Muslims and only resorted to violence when it was the last resort. And, even then, he preferred exhortation, negotiation and treaties to war and bloodshed.

Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtabah, the second Imam, was in a position of weakness, could not count on his army, and opted for strategic compromise. He made a peace treaty with Mu'awiyah which was supposed to safeguard the Sunnah of the Prophet, halt the imprecations against 'Ali, divest Mu'awiyah from the title of Amir al-Mu'minin (Leader of the Believers), protect the rights and privileges of the Shi'ites and the honor of their women and halt Mu'awiyah from appointing anybody as his successor, thus opening the door for an eventual transition of the Islamic government to its rightful heir, Imam al-Husayn, the third Imam. By the time of Imam al-Husayn, Yazid had succeeded his father Mu'awiyah as Caliph, innovation and corruption had reached epic proportions and the very survival of Islam was in jeopardy. Although he knew he would not succeed in obtaining temporal power, nor even survive the epic ordeal of Karbala, the Imam had no choice but to take a stand for original Islam and die defending it. Shockwaves were sent throughout the Muslim world as a result of the senseless slaughter of Imam al-Husayn and his Household. Truth vanquished falsehood and the final nail was placed in the coffin of the Umayyad Empire.

The Imams who succeeded Imam al-Husayn were all obliged by socio-political circumstances to adopt policies of strategic compromise. Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, for example, did not endorse Zayd's rebellion. He knew that any uprising against the imperial forces would be of no avail. Although he was offered the Caliphate by Ma'mun, Imam 'Ali al-Rida he refused to succumb to his ruse, and declined the offer. When his

hand was forced, he finally agreed to accept the succession -- knowing that it would never come to pass -- on condition that he did not command, nor order, nor give legal decisions, nor judge, nor appoint, nor dismiss, nor change anything. The Caliphate had become so inherently corrupt that the Imams did not want any part of it. They devoted themselves to the intellectual sphere of struggle, preserving and spreading the authentic teachings of Islam as had been preserved by their Family. It must not be forgotten that most of the Imams passed their entire lives, until they were martyred, without appearing or speaking in public. The occultation of Imam al-Mahdi is meant not only as a period of preparation for an appointed time, but as a lesson in "anonymity" for the followers of Ahl al-Bayt, not to confront the enemy directly. Shi'ite Islam teaches to put one's faith in God and to wait for the right time, the right moment. In the meanwhile, one must prepare oneself with knowledge and arguments to be able to discuss a series of topics when the time comes and not before. The quietist strategy is not a detachment from politics but a form of passive resistance.

The reactionaries who hold that there is no compromise in Islam have a superficial understanding of the political strategies of the Prophet Muhammad and the Twelve Imams. True revolutionaries require patience and comprehend the importance of timing. The Baathist regime was doomed to destruction and had no hope of surviving any full-scale armed conflict against the most powerful nation in the world, the United States. Shi'ite scholars saw no point in sacrificing the lives of Iraqis defending a repressive, genocidalist regime, which had slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Iranian and Iraqi Shi'ites, Kurds, and Islamic students and scholars. The Qur'an is clear on the point: "Did not God check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure" (22:40). Lead by the wisdom and political maturity of Sayyid al-Sistani, the Shi'ite Muslims decided to make a strategic compromise not to fight the coalition forces but rather to cooperate with them -- within reasonable limits and without recognizing their right to occupy Iraq -- to ensure a prompt transfer of power to the Iraqi people and the establishment of an Islamic democracy. The real revolutionaries in Iraq are not the Baathist loyalists, the Wahhabi terrorists or the Shi'ite reactionaries who seek to foment sectarian strife, destabilize Iraq and draw the country into a bloody civil war. The real revolutionaries are those who have been deep in taqiyyah [pious dissimulation] for decades and who have made a strategic compromise to cooperate with the coalition for the sake of the greater good.

Chapter 12

Like Sheep without a Shepherd:

The Lack of Leadership in Sunni Islam¹¹⁹

Be it in Palestine or Egypt, Iraq or Afghanistan, New York City or Madrid, Bali or Casablanca, Karachi or Baghdad, the atrocities committed by so-called Muslim militants are directly linked to the lack of leadership in Sunni Islam.

In Islam, the spiritual chain of command is clear. Muslims are obliged to follow the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the '*Ulama*'. The Holy Qur'an calls upon Muslims to: "Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and the holders of authority from among you" (4:59). The "holders of authority" are the religious scholars and not, as has been erroneously interpreted, leaders in general.

The Prophet Muhammad stressed the authority of the '*ulama*' over the Muslim *Ummah*. He said that: "On the Day of Judgment I will take pride in the scholars of my community, for the scholars of my community are like the prophets preceding me." He also declared that "The scholars are rulers over the people" and that "The scholars are the heirs of the prophets."

So long as Muslims hold fast to the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the '*ulama*', the guardians of the sacred sciences, they are sure not to stray. The Prophet Muhammad warned that in later days "the worst of the people would become its leader." While this applies to despots and dictators, it applies equally to unqualified upstarts who assume the leadership of the Islamic movement.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban were led by Mullah Mohammed Omar, a parochial person who never even visited the capital Kabul. Although Mullah Omar never completed his religious education, he was bold enough to grant himself the title of *Amir al-Mu'minin* and cover himself with the Prophet's cloak.

In Egypt, the ranks of the Islamic Jihad are filled with the young, the uneducated, the disenfranchised and the desperate. While the Islamic Jihad does indeed include intellectuals and professionals--most of whom went over the edge because of torture--the

¹¹⁹ This article, which was originally published in *Al-Bawaba: The Middle East Gateway* on July 25th, 2004, was picked up by the wire and rapidly reprinted in several dozen media sources across the world. Judged to be a "great essay" by Donald Sensing, the article became a required reading in "Religion after 9/11", a university course taught by Charles Grodin, Adjunct Instructor of Philosophy, at the College of St. Scholastica. Since *al-Bawaba* does not archive its articles, "Like Sheep without a Shepherd" is no longer available on its web site. We are pleased to reproduce it in this more permanent medium for the sake of posterity.

group is not led by bona fide religious scholars, which leads to obvious excesses like the November 1997 massacre of 58 tourists and 4 Egyptians at Luxor in southern Egypt.

As for al-Qaeda, known as the World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders, its leaders include Usama bin Laden, a civil engineer, and Ayman al-Zawahiri, a medical doctor who became the leader of the military wing of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, the Vanguard of Conquest, in the 1990s. Its other senior leaders include Mohammed Atef, bin Laden's military chief, who was a police officer in Egypt.

As for Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of the nebulous *al-Tawhid* group, he was raised in an unfurnished hut with only mattresses on the floor. Although this high school dropout possesses no scholarly credentials of any sort, he assumes the title of *Shaykh* and commits crimes in the name of Islam, bringing shame to the religion of mercy he claims to follow.

How is it, then, that such individuals have assumed a leadership role in the Sunni world? While the question is complex, part of the problem lies in the closing of the doors of *ijtihad* in the 10th century. *Ijtihad* refers to the post-Prophetic interpretation and application of Islamic Law to changing times and circumstances. Those who practice *ijtihad* are known as *mujtahidun* or jurists while *taqlid* refers to the act of following a *mujtahid*. In the early centuries of Islam, when the doors of *ijtihad* were still open, any new development was interpreted and analyzed in light of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Since the demise of *ijtihad* one thousand years ago, Sunni Muslims have been obliged to follow the law as understood and interpreted by medieval scholars. For this reason, Sunnism sometimes has difficulty dealing with modernity. Issues like birth control, insurance, interest and cloning are often received in a reactionary fashion by Sunni Muslims, particularly among the Wahhabis and Salafis, who adhere to an arid literalism and reject the very concepts of *taqlid* which they denounce as "blind following." Without *taqlid* of the most learned living *mujtahid*, however, Sunni Muslims are left without vital direction and guidance. As a result, some Sunni militants deliberately target civilians, including women and children, and engage in atrocities such as rape and torture as was seen in Afghanistan and Algeria. Clearly, where scholars are absent, ignorance will reign.

The revival of *ijtihad* among *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* is imperative. A living tradition of *ijtihad* would keep Islamic Law active, modern and contemporary. The demise of *ijtihad* and *taqlid* among Sunnites has left a void which is increasingly being filled by scholarly charlatans and merchants of religion. Individuals like bin Laden and al-Zawahiri have no authority whatsoever to pass *fatwas* or religious edicts. Not only are

they not *mujtahids*, they are not even '*alims*. It is a case of the blind leading the blind which leads to errors and excess. The creation of an independent scholarly hierarchy of Muslims is long overdue.

As a result of closing the doors of *ijtihad*, the independent interpretation of Islamic Law based on reasoning, many Sunni Muslim militants of today are like sheep without a shepherd, wandering aimlessly in the night. In the context of Sunni Islam, ignorance is not bliss. It is death and destruction. Unless Sunni Muslims hold fast to the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the '*ulama*', the ignorant among them will continue to fall prey to wolves in sheepskins, illegitimate leaders and pseudo-scholars for "Verily! Allah does not change the plight of a people, unless they change what is in themselves" (Qur'an 13:11).

Chapter 13

Social Justice in Islam¹²⁰

Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, Muslims were great. They excelled in scholarship and science. They were superior in every sense. Take the case of Córdoba in Islamic Spain for example: a population of one million inhabitants, a main library with a collection of 200,000 volumes, countless other bookstores, 3,800 mosques, 600,000 palaces and mansions, 200,000 houses, 700 public baths, 80,000 shops, hotels, institutions of higher learning, running water in each house... Muslims ruled the world, from southern France and Spain, to North Africa, the Near East, the Middle East, and the Far East. Muslims had military might and nobody messed with them. Ah, but alas! Rather than rooting themselves in their religion, they were weakened, they were divided, they were conquered and colonized, and the imposing Islamic empire crumbled apart. And look at Muslims now. It's time to wake up, smell the coffee and take a good, hard-look in the mirror. Have you seen the state of the Muslim Ummah? Let me share with you some statistics about the Islamic world.

According to the United Nations' Development Program and the Kuwait-based Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development:

- No Arab country spends more than 0.2 % of its gross national product on scientific research, and most of that money goes toward salaries. The U.S. spends more than ten times that amount.

- Fewer than one in twenty Arab university students pursue scientific disciplines.

- There are only 18 computers per 1,000 people in the Arab world. The global average is 78 per 1,000.

- Only 370 industrial patents were issued to people in Arab countries between 1980 and 2000. In South Korea during that same period, 16,000 industrial patents were issued.

- No more than 10,000 books were translated into Arabic over the entire past millennium, equivalent to the number translated into Spanish each year.

According to the book by Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and the Middle Eastern Response*:

¹²⁰ This article was originally delivered as a speech on Saturday, October 14th, 2006, at the Islamic Center of the Quad Cities, in Moline, Illinois, and appears in print for the first time.

-Muslims make up one quarter of the world's population, but they possess only 6% of the world's wealth.

-Two-thirds of the world's poor who live on less than \$2 US a day are Muslims. This income is depreciating by 2% annually, the greatest depreciation suffered by individuals in the so-called developing world.

-Not a single Muslim country is among the 30 wealthiest nations.

-Out of the 5,000 most popular products in the world, not one is produced by a Muslim country.

-Except for oil, caviar, and Persian rugs, the 57 member countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference offer nothing to the international marketplace.

-The debt of the Muslim countries is estimated in the hundreds of billions of dollars. The level of self-sufficiency in these countries is in perpetual decline.

-The life expectancy for a person in the Muslim world is twenty years shorter than a person living in the West. This is the direct result of poor health, nutrition, education, and work conditions, not to mention subjugation and repression.

-40% of young educated Muslims cannot find adequate employment in their own countries. They either remain unemployed in their countries or are forced to migrate to the West.

-Unemployment in the West varies between 5 to 12%. The Muslim world has an unemployment rate of 20% and it continues to increase.

-Muslim graduates and laborers are in desperate need of employment. Unable to provide homes for themselves, they are unable to marry and establish families. Many young women never find husbands. 40% of Iranian women under of twenty will probably never marry. The statistics are the same for Saudi Arabia.

-According to the World Health Organization, Oman is the only Muslim country which offers adequate, up-to-date healthcare to its citizens.

-The Muslim world has little to no political influence. Muslims are excluded from joining the club of decision makers dominated by a handful of Western nations. Take, for example, the Western apprehension regarding Turkey's adhesion to the European Union. They won't even accept us if we are secular.

-With the downfall of the Communist Block and the emergence of the U.S. as the sole economic and military superpower in the world, the Europeans got together, despite their linguistic, cultural, and religious differences, despite centuries of warfare and

hostility, and formed the European Union. What prevents Muslims from forming an Islamic Union to defend our interests in the world?

-Of the thirty worst conflicts in the world, 28 of them concern Muslim people or Muslim countries.

-Two-thirds of the world's political prisoners languish in prisons in the Muslim world.

-In the past three decades, more than 2.5 million Muslims have been killed in wars within the Muslim world, making Muslims the most killed people on the planet.

So, as Muslims, we can easily identify with victims of terrorism. We can easily empathize with suffering of others. Rather than empathizing with us, however, we are often made the scapegoat, and accused of being terrorists when we are the greatest victims of terrorism on the planet.

-80% of the world's refugees are Muslims.

-The Muslim world is the least productive part of the world when it comes to scholarship, scientific research and technology.

-Muslims have the highest rate of illiteracy in the world with over 50% of Muslim women being unable to read or write. And yet the very first word of the Revelation was *Iqra!* Read! Read! Read!

-Muslims do not read and they surely do not write. There are more books published in Greece in one year than the entire Islamic world combined.

-The Muslim world is rich in natural resources, but they are underexploited or unexploited. Just look what Chávez has done with petroleum. He has changed the political situation for all of Spanish America. He sells oil at the most reduced rate to developing nations and hikes up the price for the developed nations. He has boosted the economies in the entire region.

-The Arabs, on the other hand, have even greater resources, but they don't do use them to wield any real influence, to help Muslims countries develop. For the Arabs, it ain't about Islam, it's about Uncle Sam. It's all about money, honey.

-Africa has huge natural resources, many of them in Muslim zones, but they are all kept as a reserve for neo-colonial interests.

-Culturally-speaking, artistically-speaking, Muslims have little to no influence in the mass-media. Yes, Muslims have al-Jazeera, and *alhamdulillah* for that, but al-Jazeera is not an Islamic network. They are not committed to the Muslim cause. They are secular Arab nationalists.

Yes, that is all pretty bad. Makes us feel pretty sad. For some of us, the very mention of this makes us very mad... But that is why Muslims came to America. Oh yeah, and are they better off than they were before? Let us look at some statistics about Islam in America compiled by Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Adair Lumis in their sociological study on *Islamic Values in the United States*. According to their survey:

- 63% of Muslims born in the U.S. describe themselves as religiously deviant, defined as eating *haram*, going clubbing and drinking alcohol, compared to 37% of foreign-born Muslims.

- 54% of Muslim immigrants believe that Muslim men, 18 and over, should be able to date. 78% of first generation Muslims think that it is okay and 95% of second generation approve of such behavior. And 51% of Muslims as a whole believe that a Muslim girl should be able to date boys.

- 1/5th of Muslims agree with abortion.

- 1/5th of Muslims believe that Muslim women should be able to marry Jewish and Christian men.

- Young Muslim women, especially first and second generation American-born, often wear mini-skirts and shorts in hot weather.

- Only 4% of Muslims born in the U.S. believe that women should only go out wearing hijab compared to 41% of Pakistanis.

- 33% of Muslims celebrate Christmas, Christmas tree and all.

- 40% of Muslims think Islamic school is not important.

- 49% of second generation American Muslims consumed alcohol in the past six months; 45% of first generation Muslim Americans, as well as 26% of immigrants. If we divide these percentages on the basis of gender and origin, we see that 24% of Muslim immigrant men drink alcohol compared to 62% of those born in America. And most surprisingly of all, 27% of Muslim immigrant women drink alcohol, compared to 40% of those who were born in America.

- 1/4th of Muslims do not read food labels to see whether the product contains lard or pork by-products.

- 50% of Muslims do not eat *halal* meat.

- 7% of Muslims have eaten pork in the past 6 months.

- Only 50% of Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan; 33% of U.S. born Muslims fast; 47% of Lebanese fast; 59% of other Middle East Arabs fast, while 73% of Pakistanis fast.

-31% of Muslims read the Qur'an; 16% of U.S. born Muslims; 36% of Lebanese Muslims; 33% of other Middle East Arabs, and 48% of Pakistanis.

-24% of Muslims pray five times a day; 21% of U.S. born Muslims; 27% of Lebanese; 6% of other Middle East Arabs; and 34% of Pakistanis.

According to a nationwide survey conducted in France, which is included in Paul Balta's *L'Islam dans le monde*:

-Only 37% of Muslims in France describe themselves as practicing Muslims

-60% of Muslims in France fast during the month of Ramadan

-41% of Muslims in France pray five times a day

-35% of Muslims in France drink alcohol

-45 % of Muslims in France are opposed to girls wearing hijab at school

-25 % of Muslims in France are opposed to girls wearing hijab in public

The studies have been done. The results are in. The facts are clear. If you are 100% Muslim, your children will be 50% Muslim, and your grandchildren will not be Muslims at all. We have seen this phenomenon over and over again, starting with the Muslim pioneers from Syria and Lebanon who settled in the Mid-West in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Yes, Muslim settlers, *insha' Allah*, that is a story I can share with you in the future. They came by the tens of thousands and they are all gone, with the exception of a handful of them. Most of them were assimilated; they lost their language, their culture, and most seriously, their Islam. They lost their faith, their *iman*, their *din*. They intermarried with Christians. They reneged on their religion. They converted themselves into *kuffar*.

Do not think for a second that your Islam is safe. It might be safe in the Muslim world. It might be safe back home. Over there, if you were born Muslim, you will stay Muslim, it is as simple as that. People do not change religion. People do not go shopping for a religion. In the Muslim world, if you change your religion you cut off your family, your clan, your tribe, your social class. There would be nowhere for you to go. In the Muslim world, you just go with the flow. In the Western world your children are like fish swimming upstream all the time. Some will get tired. Some will be overcome by the current. If you reject your religion here, you will fit in perfectly well into the secular way of Satan.

So trust me, pay heed to what I say. I speak by experience. If you live in the Western world, you will face trials and tribulations. Your children will be tested. I know you do not like to hear this, but I am telling it to you anyway. This is information you

need to know. Muslims need to engage in self-criticism. What I am teaching is medicine and sometimes the medicine does not taste too good, it does not go down too well, but your spiritual health and survival depends on it. If you see the state of our *din* you will understand the state of the Ummah. There is a clear correlation. Allah helps those who help themselves. You have heard it before and you will hear it again, “Allah does not change the condition of a people unless they change it themselves” (13:11).

As Almighty Allah said, “Surely we created man of the best stature. Then we reduced him to the lowest of the low. Save those who believe and do good works, and theirs is a reward unfailing” (95:4-6). There is no doubt that the Golden Age of Islam is long gone. There is no doubt that the Ummah has been ransacked, pillaged, and plundered. There is no doubt that Muslims have been degraded and humiliated by Western imperialism and neo-colonialism. There is no doubt that Muslims are a fallen people who have been reduced to the lowest of the low. But Almighty Allah is Merciful. Almighty Allah is Compassionate and Forgiving. So what do Muslims need to do? Where do Muslims need to go from here?

If Islam is to survive and to succeed, not only in the West, but in the world, they need to be Muslimized. They need to re-root themselves in their religious tradition. They need to Islamize themselves and their families first and foremost. They need to build institutions, masjids, musallahs, and Islamic centers: the mosque is the center of the community of believers. They need to educate their children, not to be foreigners but not to be assimilated either, to be well-integrated Muslim Americans. And to do that, they need schools, Islamic schools, which will teach a universal Islam, not a sectarian Islam, an Islam based on the fundamentals of faith shared by all Muslims, be they Sunni, Sufi or Shi‘i: *Tawhid*, the belief in One God; *Nubuwwah*, the belief in all the Prophets, from Adam to Noah to Abraham to Moses to Jesus to Muhammad, the Final Messenger of God; and *Qiyamah*, the belief in the Day of Judgment. As long as you pray, you fast, you pay *zakat*, you promote the good and you forbid the wrong, you are a Muslim. It does not matter if you pray like this or you pray like that.

Muslims should be at the forefront of Islamic unity, saying enough with the butchery, enough with Muslims massacring Muslims. We have enough with the *kuffar* killing Muslims. When the *kuffar* kill Muslims, they do not ask them if they’re Sunni, Shi‘ah, or Sufi: “You Muslim? You dead!” Muslims are all the same to them. Shame on those Muslims who slay their own brethren: blowing up babies; butchering women, men, and children, while in prayer! You can not kill someone who professes the *shahadah*: *la*

ilaha ila Allah, Muhammad Rasul Allah. That is exactly what our enemies want. When they see Sunnis and Shi'ahs killing each other, the *kuffar* are laughing all the way to our cemetery. Trust me! They want a civil war in Iraq. That is exactly what they are trying to incite. So once Muslims straighten themselves out as individuals, as a community, they can reach out to others and invite them into the family of Islam. But how is this to be done?

Yes there is a time for *tabligh* and *da'wah*. Yes there is a time for propagation, publication, and preaching. But first and foremost, Muslims need to lead by example. They need to be examples for their own families, for their own children. They must become socially active and contribute to their communities. And this is the Sunnah of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him and his household. Muhammad was a great man before he received the revelation. He was an honest man, a trustworthy man. He cared about the poor, the oppressed, and the downcast, regardless of their religion. He cast his lot with the Wretched of the Earth. He cared about black people and he cared about women at a time where both were considered chattel, property to be bought and sold, used and abused, disgraced and discarded.

The Prophet preached to his family first and foremost. He then preached to his friends and only later to the people. He would never have attracted a following had he not been the very embodiment of Islam, the Qur'an walking. So, yes, Muslims must preach, but if they really want to reach, to have a permanent impact, they need to teach by example, by doing good deeds, by becoming socially committed and socially active. They need to work with the meek, and the dispossessed. They need to work with blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans. They need to work with women. They need to work with the poor and the homeless. They need to work with prisoners and ex-cons. And they need to defend the environment. And this is completely Qur'anic.

Islam does not believe that faith is sufficient for salvation. According to Islam, faith, the belief in One God, must always be accompanied by works, by good deeds, by righteous action. As Almighty Allah says in *al-Furqan*, the Holy Qur'an:

Truly pious is he who believes in God, and the Last Day; and the angels, and revelation, and the prophets; and spends his substance--however much he himself may cherish it--upon his near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and the beggars, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage.
(2:177)

The believers are “They believe in Allah and the Last Day; they enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten (in emulation) in (all) good works: They are in the ranks of the righteous” (3:114). The believers are “Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men;- for Allah loves those who do good (3:134).” They are “Those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness, and establish regular prayers and regular charity, will have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve” (2:277). They are those who “Do good deeds, to establish regular prayers, and to practice regular charity; and they constantly served Us (and Us only)” (21:73).

If you peruse the Qur’an, you will see that Almighty Allah consistently associated faith with good deeds: “those who believe and do deeds of righteousness” (4:57; 4:122; 4:173; 5:93); “If any do deeds of righteousness,- be they male or female - and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them” (4:124); “To those who believe and do deeds of righteousness hath Allah promised forgiveness and a great reward.” (5:9). After faith, people are judged on the basis of their deeds. As Almighty Allah says: “To all are degrees according to their deeds: for thy Lord is not unmindful of anything that they do” (6:132); “Verily this Qur’an doth guide to that which is most right, and give the Glad Tidings to the Believers who work deeds of righteousness, that they shall have a magnificent reward” (17:9); “As to those who believe and work righteous deeds, they have, for their entertainment, the Gardens of Paradise” (18:107); “On those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, will (Allah) Most Gracious bestow love.” (19:96); “But those who believe and work deeds of righteousness - to them shall We give a Home in Heaven,- lofty mansions beneath which flow rivers,- to dwell therein for aye;- an excellent reward for those who do (good)!” (29:58); “For those who believe and work righteous deeds, there will be Gardens of Bliss” (31:8). Almighty Allah tells us to “Spend your wealth in the way of Allah” (2:195); “And promote what is good and forbid what is wrong” (31:17).

In order to be good Muslims, true Muslims, pious Muslims, Muslims need to lose themselves in the service of others. Every human being is a manifestation of Allah. It is by serving people that you serve Allah. As Almighty Allah says in a famous *hadith qudsi*,

O Son of Adam, I fell ill and you visited Me not. He will say: O Lord, and how should I visit You when You are the Lord of the worlds? He will say: Did you not know that My servant had fallen ill and you visited him not? Did you not know that had you visited him you would have found Me with him? O son of

Adam, I asked you for food and you fed Me not. He will say: O Lord, and how should I feed You when You are the Lord of the worlds? He will say: Did you not know that My servant asked you for food and you fed him not? Did you not know that had you fed him you would surely have found the reward with Me? O son of Adam, I asked you to give Me to drink and you gave Me not to drink. He will say: O Lord, how should I give You to drink when You are the Lord of the worlds? He will say: My servant asked you to give him to drink and you gave him not to drink. Had you given him to drink you would have surely found that with Me. (Muslim)

Twenty years ago, even ten years ago, there was not a single soup-kitchen operated by Muslims in North America. There was not a single thrift-shop like the Salvation Army operated by Muslims. There was not a single Free Medical Clinic operated by Muslims. *Alhamdulillah*, Muslims have made some progress. In South Central Los Angeles, a group of Muslim UCLA students started a medical clinic a decade ago. Today, the non-religious University Muslim Medical Association Community Clinic treats some 16,000 patients, mostly Hispanics, regardless of their legal or illegal status. The clinic does not seek Muslim converts. Merely by being good, by helping the community, hundreds and thousands of Hispanics have embraced Islam. In the 1990s, there were an estimated 80,000 Latino Muslims in the United States. That number has now reached 200,000.

So, when it comes to the survival and success of Islam in the world and particularly in the West, your options are clear. You can convert yourself into a Malcolm X or a Martin Luther King, start a grass roots movement, get popular support and put pressure on the establishment. The problem, of course, is that both of them ended up dead. That is enough to dissuade a lot of people. Plus, since Sept. 11th, 2001, and the implementation of the Patriot Act, I doubt many people would be inclined to engage in such activism. So, what are your other options?

Well, you can join a large group or association which has lots of money. With that money, you can accomplish many projects. It does not have to be a Muslim organization. Social efforts do not have to be faith-based. Muslims are perfectly capable of functioning within existing organisms and even assume leadership positions. Or, if you are loaded with money, you can become a philanthropist, engage in charitable work, provide food for the poor, shelter for the homeless, and so forth. Jewish people have

money. In fact, they have the highest family income of all ethnic groups, earning twice as much as other Americans. But Arab Americans also have money.

The average Arab American household earns more per year than the average American household. Close to 30% of Arab Americans earn over \$75,000 per year, compared to 22% of other Americans. The mean income for an Arab American is 8% higher than the national average. Now when you invest your money, there should be no strings attached. You do not do like those missionaries who come with a spoon in one hand and the Bible in the other. If you open a food bank, it is for all people, not just Muslims. If you open a shelter for battered women, it is for all women, not just Muslim women.

You do good for the sake of good. You do good for a reward promised by Allah. And you do good in your country first and foremost. And by “your country,” I mean the United States of America, not Bangladesh, Pakistan or Afghanistan. I know many immigrants come to the West with the idea of making money and going back “home.” Boy do I have news for you. If your children were born and raised in the West, their notion of “home” will not be the same as yours. Their home is here. So, if you want to invest in your children, in their future, you invest in their home, the society in which they live which is riddled with social problems. I have never seen Imam Siraj Wahaj trying to fight crack in the Congo. He was battling with brothers in Brooklyn. Do you have any idea how many people he attracted to Islam simply by cleaning up his hood from dope dealers and crack heads?

Yes, but we should help Muslims first, you say. Nothing stops you from helping Muslims, but helping Muslims here, along with anyone else who needs help. They do not have to become Muslims. They do not have to convert. But, with all the enemies we have, we could sure use some friends, some people who sympathize with us on the issues. And this is entirely Islamic, fully justified by *fiqh*. If you study Islamic jurisprudence, you will see that *zakat*, *khums*, and *sadaqa* can be used in the service of Allah (*fisabilillah*) or to “gain over, to reconcile, or to incline the hearts to Islam.” As Almighty Allah says in the Qur’an: *muallafa qulbuhum* (9:60).

Giving charity to feed people, here and abroad, is a monumental waste of money, unless it is directly linked to the creation of institutions and infrastructure. If you give a man a fish, you feed him for one day. If you teach a man to fish, he can fish for his whole life. So, you need to see results, you need to follow up.

You do not just give *da'wah* to some black brother in a jail house cell and once he is free he is back to his usual hell. Not only are they traumatized for life for what they experienced in prison, typically for non-violent crimes, they are released and reneged upon, which explains their high rate of recidivism. There is no infrastructure in place to ensure their proper integration into society. So, either you work with existing groups who try to help ex-cons find employment, housing, health care or you create an association to support such people.

We have desperately impoverished people in the United States, people who have been disenfranchised. Poverty pushes people into drugs, prostitution, crime and delinquency. 100,000 people die every year in the United States because they are denied medical treatment, because they do not have medical insurance. Let us not even get into the issue of the mentally ill. Most homeless people suffer from psychiatric disorders. It is what led them to be homeless. They used to be cared for by the state, but thanks to President Reagan, all the mental hospitals were closed and the mentally ill were set free on the street. Of course, all of this requires money. If you do not have money, or you do not have access to money through an association, what do you do?

Well, another approach would consist in attaining public office allowing you to accomplish these very same tasks using state or federal funds. In order to do so, of course, Muslims must start to work within the existent political framework or create a political group which would have the possibility of winning local, state, or even federal elections. We should have Muslims running at every level. We should have Muslims running as Democrats, as Independents, and even as Republicans. The Democratic Party is full of liberal Christians and the Republican Party is full of conservative Christians. The Christians have their bases covered. The same applies for Jewish people. They are well-represented in each party. Whether the Republicans win or the Democrats win, the White House will defend Jewish and Israeli interests. Let us not even get into Political Action Committees. There is not a single PAC defending Islamic interests. And it is a crying shame. Muslims do have money but they do not have any influence. We have to convert that cash into clout, into political power.

Yes, but we are a minority. Well, so what? So are the Jews and they are well-represented, and it is not the result of a conspiracy, it is the result of education and hard-work. These people were elected by the masses, primarily by Christians, but also by voters of all other religions. If they were elected, it was because they were active in their communities, were well-organized, well-financed, and well-liked.

We need to look at what other communities have done to get ahead and emulate their example. *Alhamdulillah*, for organizations like CAIR, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, but that's just a beginning. *Tabarak Allah* for Charles Bilal of Kountze, Texas, who became the nation's first Muslim mayor in 1991 and for Osman Siddique, who became the first Muslim U.S. Ambassador in 1999. To Fiji: but we will take what we can get! But there are 24 Jewish ambassadors! There are 10 Jewish Senators and 25 members of the House of Representatives are Jewish. I am not saying this to criticize the Jewish people. I am saying this to criticize us Muslims for lack of initiative and for socio-political apathy. I am saying this to compare.

Considering that Muslims have been in this country since the time of slavery, that there were a hundred thousand Muslim pioneers in the 1800s and early 1900s, that there are maximum of 5 million Muslims in the U.S. right now, we are grossly underrepresented. One mayor, one ambassador, a few locally and state-elected representatives, and that is it, man... But the Jews have hundreds of politicians: presidential candidates, cabinet members, senior administration officials, senators, representatives, ambassadors, governors, mayors, economists. They shape this country and its policies. The Jewish population of the U.S. is roughly the same as the Muslim population. There is no reason Muslims cannot excel like they have.

Muslims were great. They are still great, but their greatness has come latent. They are sleeping geniuses. They need to awake from their slumber and reclaim our position in the world. Muslims will rule the world again. It was promised to Muslims by Almighty Allah: "And we wrote in the Psalms after the Reminder that surely My righteous servants will inherit the earth" (21:105). The Earth belongs to Muslims, on the condition that they are righteous, on the condition that they are pious, God-fearing, and just. Human beings were appointed the representatives of God on Earth: "And your Lord said to the Angels: 'I am making a successor in earth'" (Qur'an 2:30). Muslims were chosen as the Middle Nation, the Nation of Moderation: "Thus have we made of you a nation justly balanced" (2:143). But Almighty Allah has warned humanity: "We, even we, created them, and strengthened their frame. And when we will, we can replace them, bringing others like them in their stead" (76:28); that "Nay! I swear by the Lord of the rising places and the setting places of the planets that we are able to replace them by (others) better than them. And we are not to be outrun" (70:40). How do you expect God to help Muslims if they are corrupt pig-eating alcoholics who do not even pray? *A'udhu billah*.

Besides the political struggle, there is also the academic struggle, the intellectual jihad. And it is a war. There is no doubt about it. Muslims are being attacked militarily, politically, economically, and academically. There are very few Muslim professors in the Western world and the vast majority of the ones in those positions are cultural Muslims at best and secular Muslims at worst. They simply do not have the Islamic spirit. I have a colleague who is so ashamed of being an Arab, who is so ashamed of being a Muslim, that he wants to change his name to Alexander St-George. Your name is your identity. It is the indicator of your religious affiliation. Hold on to it like you would hold on to your life. We need pride, people, we need pride. And you can not be proud by sticking your head in the sand like an ostrich, by lowering your head, by keeping a low profile, by practicing pious dissimulation. Power does not respect weakness. Strength only respects strength. So, if you want to be respected, you need to have self-esteem, self-respect. You need to be smart, educated, and successful.

85% of Arab Americans have a high school degree. That is the same as the national average. *Masha' Allah*. 40% of American High School graduates go to college. However, 85% of Jews go to college. 25% of Arab Americans have a bachelor's degree, compared to 24% of Americans at large: 1% percent higher. And 17% of Arab Americans have a graduate degree. Now that is good, that is twice the American average of 9%. For Jewish people, however, it is 25%. 20 to 60% of Ivy League graduates are Jewish; they form 13% of law school professors; they have claimed 10-15% of Nobel Prizes, and the list goes on and on and on. Muslims have received 9 Nobel Prizes, so *subhan Allah* for that. So, in some areas Muslims are doing fine. In others, they are lagging terribly behind.

It is essential for Muslims to become educated, to excel in all fields, and to associate themselves with universities, thus providing a means to address academic and cultural issues. As the Prophet said, "The ink of a scholar is more precious than the blood of a martyr." But where are the scholarships? I have scoured thousands of pages of encyclopedias of scholarships and have not found a single one offered by Muslims for Muslims. There are all kinds of scholarships for children of veterans, for blacks, for Jews, Latinos, for every type of minority imaginable, but not a single scholarship for Muslims to study science, to study math, to study engineering, to study nuclear physics... For the love of God, if you have money, start an endowment!

As far as I am concerned, these are the only viable approaches: fund social projects with your own money, join other organizations and use their money for social

projects, assume roles of political leadership, become a scholar, an academic, or an intellectual, affiliated with a major research institution to push your Islamic agenda. Whether you agree with me or you disagree with me, the Muslim community needs to have this discussion. Do you want to be passive members of society or active members? I would urge you to be active, to have a voice, and to make your voice heard.

So, in the name of Allah, I encourage you all to become meaningful members of society, to contribute to the socio-political process and to contribute to the American community. As Almighty Allah says, “Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity” (3:104). Verily, “Is there any Reward for good other than good?” (55:60).

Chapter 14

Shi'ism in Morocco¹²¹

The fact that there are followers of Ahl al-Bayt in Morocco should come as no surprise considering the fact that wherever there are Muslims, there are Shi'ites. The history of Islam in Morocco traces back to the year 683 when Uqba ibn Nafi, the commander of the 'Umayyad dynasty in Damascus conquered the region. While many Berbers were quick to embrace Islam, this did not guarantee their support for their Arab conquerors who taxed them heavily, treated converts as second-class Muslims, and, in the worst cases, even enslaved them. As a result, many Berbers became inclined to the teachings of Kharijism, as well as Isma'ili and Imami Shi'ism.

It was only in 788, with the arrival of Idris ibn Abd Allah, the founder of the Idrisid Dynasty, when Imami Shi'ism spread throughout the country. Moulay Idris, as he was respectfully known, traced his ancestry back to 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and Fatimah al-Zahra. As an Imami Shi'ite, he was persecuted by the Abbasids. As one of the few survivors of the battle of Fakhkh, in which many 'Alids were slain by the Abbasids, Idris found refuge in the Maghreb. There, he was embraced by Muslim Berbers as their Imam, converted the remaining Berber tribes to Shi'ite Islam, and created the first autonomous Islamic state in Morocco. Moulay Idris established the sharifian tradition in Morocco, by which the claim of descent from the Prophet was the basic requirement for monarchic rule. His dynasty was also the first to incorporate both Berbers and Arabs.

The Idrisids would rule Morocco until 985, losing power for short periods (922-25 and 927-37) to the Miknasa who were Fatimid allies, and thus Isma'ili Muslims. In the 10th century, the Idrisid dynasty fell apart and Morocco was divided into smaller kingdoms. The entire country was re-united once again by the Almoravides (1062-1145), who were followed by the Almohades (1145-1248), the Merinides (1248-1554), the Saadians (1554-1660), and, finally, the Alaouites (1660-present).

Every dynasty which has ruled Morocco--with the exception of the Almoravides and the Almohades--has claimed descent from the Prophet and followed a Shi'ite political model. With regards to theology, philosophy and jurisprudence, Moroccan rulers have traditionally espoused the Maliki *madhhab*, officially and obligatorily imposed by the Almoravides. Much like the Wahhabis, the Almoravides, sought to "purify" religious

¹²¹ This article was originally published on July 27th, 2006, in *Jafariya News*. It was published under the pseudonym "Yasin 'Abd al-Salam." The article, which was picked up by the wire, and rapidly spread throughout the world, was first published in the following form: http://www.jafariyanews.com/articles/2k6/27july_Shiism_morocco.htm

practice. Their goal was the conversion of the pagans or semi-pagans of the Sahara, as well as the struggle against Christians and “heretical” Muslims. The spread of Malikism commenced around the year 1040 with the help of ‘Abd Allah ibn Yasin, a zealous Maliki missionary from Tunisia brought to the country by Almoravid leader Yahya ibn Ibrahim. The conversions, however, were not without compulsion and by 1054, the Moroccan Shi‘ites who failed to practice *taqiyyah* had all been exterminated. Due to perpetual persecution, Moroccan Shi‘ites were forced to go underground until the 21st century.

The situation for Shi‘ites in Morocco has improved sufficiently for them to present themselves timidly in the public sphere. In April of 2003, the daily *Assabah* revealed the existence of a strong Shi‘ite presence at the core of the PJD, *al-Yaqadha wa al-fadhila*, a Muslim political party. According to the article, more than fifty Shi‘ites participated in the first assembly of the movement. The report was quickly denied by Saâd Bouaachrine, one of the founders of the movement. His denial seemed odd, indeed, since for more than one year the movement’s official publication, *al-Asr*, had devoted a column to Dris Hani, the head of the Moroccan Shi‘ite community, titled “Tahta’ chams.”

Besides participating in political debate, Shi‘ite Moroccans have also established religious organizations like *Attawassoul* in al-Hoceima, *al-Inbiaat* in Tangiers, and *al-Ghadir* in Meknes. This latter group, whose founding members include Mohsinne Hani, was cited in the 2002 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, published in March 31, 2003, by the American Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. The report mentions that in May of 2002, the organization *al-Ghadir* asked for official status. It was the first time an association of Shi‘ite citizens asked for official recognition. As of 2006, no response has been received from the authorities. While the Shi‘ite community awaits official recognition from the Moroccan government, other associations are being organized discreetly in Agadir, Marrakesh, and Tetouan, without revealing their religious affiliation. If the Moroccan government, which is known for its omnipresence and omniscience, can confirm the existence of some 300 Bahais in the country, the Shi‘ites in the country have lived in such deep dissimulation that no number exists for them.

The majority of Shi‘ites of Morocco are highly educated and young, rarely reaching forty years of age. They are engineers, medical doctors, lawyers, business men, teachers, and students. It is the latter who form the core of the Shi‘ite movement in Morocco. Some of them come from Shi‘ite families which have been deep in *taqiyyah* for over one millennium. Others are converts who studied abroad in Lebanon, Syria, or Iran,

and returned with the faith of Ahl al-Bayt. And yet others embraced Shi'ism thanks to the inspiration of Imam Khomeini, as well as Hizbullah's *al-Manar* television network. This station is finding more and more viewers in Morocco, an audience which continues to steadily increase with its new broadcasts in French aimed at the Francophone intelligentsia in the Maghreb. Last but not least, we must also mention the important role of Shi'ite literature in the spread of Shi'ism in Morocco.

Shi'ite literature is now readily available in many bookstores throughout in Casablanca, Rabat, and Marrakesh. During the past two years, the International Book Fair in Casablanca was marked by exceptional fanfare around the stands of two Iranian and Lebanese publishers who offered a wide selection of books on Shi'ite Islam at rock bottom prices. Since 1999, there is even a bookstore specializing in Shi'ite scholarship in downtown Casablanca. The founder of the library is a convert to Shi'ism in his forties. He has a degree in business management and has become a fervent defender of Shi'ite philosophy. He openly discusses religious matters but insists on remaining anonymous, possibly fearing "problems" with the authorities.

If Moroccan Shi'ites remain discreet about their faith, they have plenty of reasons to do so. Many of them remember the late 70s and early 80s when the Moroccan government sought support from Saudi Arabia to counter the influence of the Islamic Revolution of Iran. As a result, Wahhabism, which had merely been a marginal movement introduced in Morocco in the 19th century, found state-support. By accepting Saudi oil money, which helped counter Iranian efforts to export the revolution as well as finance the war against the Polisario in the south, the Moroccans were obliged to accept Saudi scholars. With the help of the Saudis, a full-scale propaganda campaign against Shi'ism was launched on the country's state-controlled media. The situation reached a critical point in 1984 with the "pro-Khomeini" manifestations which resulted in many arrest. It was at this time that the Moroccan court-'*ulama*' passed a *fatwah* declaring that Imam Khomeini was an infidel. Rather than speaking in Modern Standard Arabic as is the norm in Arabic countries, broadcasters spoke in colloquial Arabic to ensure the message would reach the masses.

With the help of the Saudis, Wahhabi religious schools spread throughout Morocco, extremist literature was distributed to thousands of students, and scholarships were given to study in Saudi-supported universities. Morocco, which in modern times was known for its moderation, was soon confronted with the surrogate prodigal sons of the Saudis: Wahhabi-trained preachers who returned home to spread their theories. These

Wahhabi theorists rejected the modern open Malikism of Morocco and denounced Shi'ites as apostates. As a result, since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, many Moroccan Shi'ites, men, women, and children, have simply left the country and moved to Iran where they could practice their religion freely.

It was only in the late 1990s, with the process of democratization initiated by King Hassan II, that Shi'ites found a degree of religious freedom. The Moroccan Constitution of 1996 establishes Islam as the state religion and guarantees freedom of religion to all of its citizens (Article 6). It also guarantees its citizens freedom of expression and association (Article 9). Despite these newly-acquired constitutional rights, Shi'ite Muslims still felt obliged to meet semi-secretly to discuss and debate the future of their faith in the Maghreb. It was only after the tragedy of 9/11 that the Moroccan state started to shift its policy, officially breaking from Wahhabism as a result of the Casablanca bombings in 2003. While the real culprits were soon caught, all members of the Salafia Jihadia, the government initially suggested that Shi'ites were responsible for the attacks, subjecting 6 Shi'ites from the PDJ to investigations according to the Minister of Justice himself.

It was only in November 2002 that the continued existence of Moroccan Shi'ites came to light through an interview with Hujjat al-Islam Sayyid Dris Hani, the spiritual leader of the Moroccan Shi'ites, which appeared in *Maroc Hebdo*. Now in his mid-thirties, and living peacefully in Sale with his wife and well-to-do family, Dris Hani discovered Shi'ism as a teen and moved to Syria at the age of 18 to study in the Hawzah. Upon his return to Morocco, he felt invested with a mission: to struggle for the recognition and respect of the minority Shi'ite community. In his interview with *Maroc Hebdo*, he stated that "Morocco was a Shi'ite country"; that Shi'ism was the rule and that Sunnism was the exception. He explained that there was no need to make Morocco a Shi'ite country, because it already was one. He also hoped that the community could create a political party like the Hizbullah, but adapted to Moroccan reality. Due to pressures placed on him by the Moroccan authorities, always eager to ensure national unity through uniformity--Allah, King, and Country, one religion, one language, and one *madhhab*--he was "requested" to retract his statements. In subsequent interviews, he took back many of the statements which had been attributed to him, even his titled of "Hujjat al-Islam," made a vow of silence, and then returned to the scene speaking of Islamic ecumenism and the need to unite the Muslim 'Ummah. In his words, Sunnism and

Shi'ism are two complementary currents, and all Muslims, be they Sunni or Shi'i, share the same fundamental beliefs.

Despite the fact that Moroccans were forced to embrace Sunni Islam, they always retained many aspects of Shi'ite Islam: the love for the Prophet and his Family; the respect for descendants of the Prophet, known in Morocco as the *shurafa*; the celebration of 'Id al-Mawlid, a Shi'ite custom commenced in the country by the Merinides; the common invocations of intercession made to the Prophet and Fatimah; the reverence of saints; the rich Shi'ite-inspired spirituality of the Sufis; and the commemoration of 'Ashura. In Morocco, these mourning ceremonies are observed mainly by women and children. They were commenced by the Shi'i communities which existed in the country between the 9th and 12th centuries and were perpetuated by the Sharifs, the descendants of the Prophet. As Hujjat al-Islam Dris Hani explains, "Even countries which claim to be Sunni are in fact Shi'ite, since they all share the same respect for Ahl al-Bayt. It is just a question of their degree of Shi'ism." As many Moroccans say, "We are Sunnis in practice, but Shi'ites at heart."

Chapter 15

Saudi Arabia: The Source of Salafism¹²²

The debate between Sunnism and Shi'ism has provided a great wealth of polemical literature. Most of the Shi'ite scholarship on the subject is characterized by a thorough scholarly approach. Most of the Sunni work, however, is characterized by a belligerent, intolerant attitude which is both divisive and destructive. In the best of cases, the authors are misinformed and misrepresent the teachings of Twelve Imam Shi'ite Islam. In the worst of cases, they lance libelous allegations against Shi'ites based on fanciful fabrications in order to accuse them of heresy. This pseudo-scholarly slander has been produced by the likes of Bilal Philips, Kanadi, Sayyed Husayn Nadvi, and others, with the full financial backing of Saudi Arabia which has been spewing out anti-Shi'ite propaganda for centuries.

To accuse Shi'ite Muslims of "heresy," however, is to open up the gates of Hell, unleashing unspeakable evil. It is well-known among Muslims that Islamic Law prescribes the death penalty for heretics and apostates. Of course, not all authors are as subtle as to call Shi'ites heretics and call it quits. There are those who call quite clearly for their killing stating that "Shi'ites are worst than infidels. Their blood is *halal*." Books like *Talbees Iblees*, [*The Devil's Deception of the Shi'ites*], are often all it takes to incite ignorant fanatics to vigilante violence. The massacres of Shi'ite Muslims in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq are all the direct result of the hate propaganda produced by Saudi Arabia. In many Western nations, like Canada, there are laws against "hate literature." It is high time for Shi'ites and all supporters of human rights to demand their application, put a halt to anti-Shi'i hate propaganda, prohibit its dissemination, press for the prosecution of those who produce it, distribute it and profit from it. If Canada and the United States can ban hitlerian hatemongers like Thomas Irving, the Holocaust revisionist, from entering their countries, then surely they can ban Saudi-supported Salafists, the brothers of Bin Laden and the zealots of Zarqawi.

Saudi Arabia, the Salafist Sanctuary, has indoctrinated millions of Muslims into the Wahhabi ideology through its Islamic universities at home and affiliated institutions abroad; through its publishing houses; and through its network of Islamic organizations, mosques and associations. The vast majority of mosques in North America are controlled

¹²² Originally conceived as an article, a modified version of this work was published as part of the "Translator's Preface" in Luis Alberto Vittor's *Shi'ite Islam: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy* (Ansariyan 2006, 2010).

by ISNA, the Islamic Society of North America, which is the official organ of Saudi Salafism in the Western World. Saudi oil money has spread Salafism to such an extent that, for many, Sunnism has morphed into Salafism. The Muslim fundamentalist menace has now hit home and Saudi Arabia, the Wahhabi Wonderland, is facing the return of their prodigal sons. The chickens have finally come home to roost. So long as they spread chaos and terror elsewhere, they were fully funded and viewed with fondness. But now, the tables have turned and Franken-Fahd, their Muslim Monster, has turned against them.

Chapter 16

Concerning al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda differs radically from traditional Islamic movements in many respects. Unlike other guerrilla groups who seek to establish an Islamic State, it has no precise political aims and contents itself with “fighting the enemies of Islam, the Americans and the Israelis.” While revolutionaries of the past sought a seat at the political table, al-Qaeda seeks to blow up the table. While most Muslim militants are religious, albeit ignorant, activists, al-Qaeda is composed of marginally religious rebels. The September 11th kamikazes spend the time prior to their suicide missions attending exotic dance clubs and watching adult films. Khalid Shaykh Muhammad never set foot in a mosque in the Philippines. He spent his times in dens of iniquity. Al-Qaeda computers seized in Afghanistan and Pakistan were filled with pornographic material. What unites al-Qaeda is not so much a commitment to Islam but a deep seated hatred of the Western world. Since the goal of al-Qaeda militants is to spread chaos, destruction and death, they can be aptly described as anarchists and terrorists as opposed to Islamo-fascists.

Chapter 17

Freedom through Submission

If Western philosophy is concerned with freedom, the quality or state of being free, Islamic philosophy is concerned with submission, the act of submitting to the authority or control of another. While Islam's emphasis on submission may seem incompatible with Western notions of liberty it is not, however, a negation of freedom. There is freedom in Islam but it is qualified, conditional, defined and well-determined. It is not ambiguous, ill-defined and nebulous as it is in the West. For Muslims, true freedom can only be attained through submission to God.

In Islam, freedom is a fundamental right granted by God. It is not, however, an absolute right. Islam understands that while freedom is a good thing, too much freedom can be a bad thing. Unlimited liberty is a license for libertines. It leads to moral relativity, absence of absolute truth and ethical equivalency. Unrestrained freedom creates chaos and confusion, destruction and debauchery and the anathema of anarchy. In Islam, however, freedom and liberty cannot be disassociated from values and morality. Hence, Muslims are free to do as they please, so long as they do so within the confines of Islamic law, most of which is compatible with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the few areas where differences do occur, the difference is in degree and not necessarily in principle. For example, Islam recognizes the right to freedom of expression. It does not, however, recognize the right to spread corruption on earth. As far as Islamic thought is concerned, freedom of expression must not extend to hate propaganda and pornography. While Islam recognizes human rights, it does not forget about divine rights and the rights of society. Liberal capitalism is concerned with the rights of individuals while communism is concerned with the rights of the community. What Islam proposes is a balance between libertarianism and absolutism, between the rights of the individual and the rights of society.

In Islam, the purpose for creation is clear. As Almighty Allah explains in the Holy Qur'an: "I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me" (51:56). The Creator is categorical that "the religion before Allah is Islam [submission]" (3:19). In the final revelation received by the Prophet, the Almighty confirmed that "This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam [submission] as your religion" (5:3). The purpose of creation is not

the pursuit of freedom. The purpose of creation is obedience to the Creator. The Muslim seeks not the freedom to sin. The Muslim seeks the freedom to submit.

In Islam, the spiritual chain of command is clear. Muslims are commanded to “obey Allah, the Prophet and those charged with authority” (4:59), the religious scholars, the guardians of the sacred sciences. The entire Islamic system is structured on a hierarchy of trust, obedience and submission which is never blind but based on faith and conviction. The very word Islam means submission whereas the word Muslim means one who submits. These words are derived from the tripartite Arabic root S-L-M which conveys the meanings of security, safety, peace and tranquility. So, in Islam, submission is not synonymous with subjugation. Submission is the source of salvation. For Muslims, freedom through submission is not an oxymoron, a paradox, a contradiction in terms and a logical impossibility. It is a reality based on a balance between divine rights, individual rights and collective rights. And Allah knows best.

Chapter 18

Who were the Hypocrites? An Inquiry into Early Islam

The Holy Qur'an repeatedly reproaches and condemns the Hypocrites among the early Muslims. With the exception of 'Abdullah ibn Ubbay, universally accepted as being one of the Hypocrites among the Companions of the Prophet, the majority of Muslim scholars, mostly among *Ahl al-Sunnah* as opposed to *Ahl al-Bayt*, shy away from the subject, refusing to pin-point individuals in particular and some of the common characteristics of these false converts. In the following pages we will examine the definition of a hypocrite according to Islamic Law, the description of the Hypocrites provided in the Qu'ran and Sunnah, identify some of the leading faux Muslims and the similarities they share. We will see that a hypocrite is an individual who falsely professes Islam, who merits the lowest level of Hell, who identifies himself as such through his words and actions, and who comes from a long line of polytheistic pagans.

The Arabic word *munafiq* means "hypocrite." While the word means "hypocrite," "two-faced," and "dishonest" in a general sense, in Islamic terminology it refers to people who feign belief in Allah and Islam but who actually disbelieve, often preserving their faith in pre-Islamic polytheism. While Islam tolerates and even prescribes *taqiyyah*, pious dissimulation of one's faith in times of fear, to pretend to be a Muslim is a crime. The reason for this is quite clear: Islam protects the rights of its subjects, be they polytheists, Zoroastrians, Jews or Christians. To be a Hypocrite, however, is to be traitor, to be a spy, to pretend being Muslim to integrate the community while attempting to undermine it, indicating loyalty to the enemy. Almighty Allah describes them in the following terms:

Of the people there are some who say: 'We believe in Allah and the Last Day;' but they do not (really) believe. Fain would they deceive Allah and those who believe, but they only deceive themselves, and realize (it) not. In their hearts is a disease; and Allah has increased their disease: and grievous is the penalty they (incur), because they are false (to themselves). When it is said to them: 'Make not mischief on the earth,' they say: 'Why, we only want to make peace!' Of a surety, they are the ones who make mischief, but they realize (it) not. When it is said to them: 'Believe as the others believe,' they say: 'Shall we believe as the fools believe?'—Nay, of a surety they are fools but they do not know. When they meet those who believe, they say: 'We believe;' but when they are alone with

their evil ones, they say: 'We are really with you, we (were) only jesting.' Allah will throw back their mockery on them and give them rope in their trespasses; so they will wander like blind ones (to and fro). They are they who have bartered guidance for error: but their traffic is profitless, and they have lost true direction. Their similitude is that of a man who kindled a fire; when it lighted all around him, Allah took away their light and left them in utter darkness, so they could not see. Deaf, dumb, and blind, they will not return (to the path) (2:8-18)

The Hypocrite is likened to a man who "calls Allah to witness about what he has in his heart; yet is the most contentious of enemies. When he turns his back, his aim is everywhere to spread mischief through the earth... When it is said to him: 'Fear Allah,' he is led by arrogance to (more) crime. Enough for him is Hell;--an evil bed indeed (to lie on)" (2:204-206). The Hypocrites are described as those who turn to the devil for judgment (4:60) and when they are called to what Allah has revealed "avert their faces...in disgust" (4:61). They are people who wish that the Muslims should reject their faith as they do (4:89). They are "liars" (lix:11) for whom there are no excuses. As Allah says, "Make ye no excuses: ye have rejected faith after ye had accepted it" (9:66). Almighty Allah urges those who believe to "Enter into Islam whole-heartedly; and follow not the footsteps of the Evil One; for he is to you an avowed enemy" and warns that "If ye backslide after the clear (signs) have come to you, then know that Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise (2:208-209). The Almighty criticizes false conversions when He says: "The desert Arabs say, 'We believe.' Say, 'Ye have no faith; but ye (only) say, 'We have submitted our wills to Allah.' For not yet has faith entered your hearts" (49: 14). Allah describes the Hypocrites as "nearer to unbelief than to faith" (3:167). According to the Qur'an,

The Hypocrites, men and women, (have an understanding) with each other: they enjoin evil and forbid what is just, and are close with their hands. They have forgotten Allah; so He hath forgotten them. Verily the Hypocrites are rebellious and perverse. Allah hath promised the Hypocrites, Men and women, and the rejecters of faith, the fire of Hell: therein shall they dwell: sufficient is it for them: for them is the curse of Allah, and enduring punishment. (9:67-68)

According to Allah, "The Hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire: no helper wilt thou find for them" (4:145). Now that the Hypocrites have been duly defined and described, the only thing remaining is their identification and common classification. Imam 'Ali, describes the Hypocrites as follows:

They have made Satan the master of their affairs, and he has taken them as partners. He has laid eggs and hatched them in their bosoms. He creeps and crawls in their laps. He sees through their eyes, and speaks with their tongues. In this way he has led them to sinfulness and adorned for them foul things like the action of one which Satan has made partner in his domains and speaks untruth through his tongue. (123)

In one of his sermons, the Imam describes the Days of Ignorance as a time when:

Allah was disobeyed, Satan was given support and belief had been forsaken. As a result the pillars of religion fell down, its traces could not be discerned, its passages had been destroyed and its streets had fallen into decay. People obeyed Satan and tread his paths. They sought water from his watering places. Through them Satan's emblems got flying and his standard was raised in vices which trampled the people under their hoofs... (103)

Interestingly enough, the Imam likens the pre-Islamic Arabs to the present-day hypocrites, denouncing them in the following terms:

They sowed vices, watered them with deception and harvested destruction. None in the Islamic community can be taken at par with the Progeny of the Prophet. One who was under their obligation cannot be matched with them. They are foundation of religion and pillar of belief...They possess the chief characteristics of vicegerency. In their favor exists the will and succession [of the Prophet]. (104)

As Peter Mansfield explains in *The Arab World: A Comprehensive History*, "By the fourth century AD the people of southern Arabia abandoned polytheism to adopt their own form of monotheism, a belief in a supreme god known as *al-Rahman* or, "The Merciful" (16). As Vernet has observed, the name *Rahman* appears frequently in the Meccan chapters of the Qur'an (3). Since this was the name of the One God worshipped by the Sabeian monotheists, the Qur'an may have been appealing to these southern Arabian believers. As Vernet also points out, the name *al-Rahim*, which permeates the Qur'an, was the name of the One God which was venerated by the Safales, Palmineros, and southern Arabs during the Days of Ignorance (3).

When the Qur'an employs the divine attribute *al-Rahman*, and instructs the believers to "Call upon Allah, or call upon Rahman, by whatever ye call Upon Him, (it is well): for to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names" (17:110), it may very well be addressing southern Arabian monotheists. Although Allah was the name of the Creator

used by Arab polytheists, *al-Rahman* was the name of the Creator used by southern Arabian monotheists. In fact, *al-Rahman* was the name the southern Arabs applied to the God of the Jews, and to God the Father from the Christian Trinity. Appealing to the southern Arab believers, the Prophet stressed that, after Allah, the personal name of God, the greatest divine attribute was *al-Rahman*. As he explained, “Verily, the names most liked by Allah are ‘Abd Allah and ‘Abd al-Rahman” (Muslim).

Islam did not appear in a vacuum. As Hitti has explained, vague monotheistic ideas has already appeared and developed into a cult prior to the arrival of the Prophet (1968: 20). As Lapidus has pointed out, “By the sixth century, monotheism already had a certain vogue. Many non-believers understood the monotheistic religions; others, called *hanif* in the Quran, were believers in one God but not adherents of any particular faith” (16). As Bishar explains,

Only a few years before Muhammad’s time, a compromise religion was in the making; some of the more sophisticated Arabs accepted Allah of the Ka’aba as a non-tangible God without a form or representation; however they worshipped him according to their old pagan customs... This group of Arabs was called the Hanifs, many of whom later on became followers of Muhammad due, perhaps, to the great similarity between Islam and their beliefs. Muhammad’s cousin-in-law is known to have been a Hanif, and many scholars assert that Muhammad himself had been greatly influence by the Hanif concepts before he introduced the Islamic religion to Arabia. This Hanif religion was gradually spreading among the Arabs... (53)

Although they were neither Jews nor Christians, these southern Arab monotheists believed in a single, transcendent God. While the Prophet had difficulty in converting polytheists, Jews, and Christians to his cause, it was these primitive Arab believers who eagerly embraced his monotheistic message. It comes as no surprise, then, that the bulk of the Prophet’s sincere Sahabas were of southern Arabian stock. Considering the natural predisposition the southern Arabs had towards monotheism, it comes as no surprise that Muhammad was granted refuge in Medina, a city composed primarily of southern Arabs (Naiki 59). Although there were bona fide believers among both northern and southern Arabs, it was the southern Arabs, as opposed to the northern Arabs, who sided with the Ahl al-Bayt, and defended the rights of ‘Ali and his descendants.

In the previous pages we examined the meaning of hypocrisy in light of the Qur’an, the Sunnah, the Arabic language and Islamic terminology. We have seen that a

hypocrite, in the Islamic context, is an unbeliever who poses as a believer, and is considered the most serious of sins in Islam. The hypocrites, as we demonstrated, manifested this disbelief through their words and actions, and were those who opposed the Prophet and His Family subtly and through open hostility. Upon examination of the hypocrites, we found that, to a great extent, they shared many similarities. The Muslims, we observed, were the Family of Muhammad and, in large part, his faithful followers among the southern Arabians, many of whom had been monotheistic prior to the advent of Islam and were accustomed to a religious social order. The hypocrites, on the other hand, were predominantly northern Arabians who had previously been polytheists, who believed in a more secular vision of the state, and who had embraced Islam for socio-political profit.

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Chapter 19

The Foundations of Islamic Unity¹²³

Considering the current Sunni-Shi'ah conflict occurring in the Middle East, and much of the Muslim world, Luis Alberto Vittor's *Shi'ite Islam: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy* could not come at a more opportune time. Radically departing from the confrontational polemicist propaganda of the past, Vittor demonstrates that the greatness of Shi'ite Islam does not reside in a denigration of Sunni Islam. Shi'ite Islam is great in and of itself. One does not need to criticize the Companions or the Caliphs to exalt the Twelve Imams. The Imams of *ahl al-bayt* are great in and of themselves. One does not need to criticize the Imams of the Sunni schools of jurisprudence to exalt Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq. The Sixth Imam is great in and of himself, having left legions of scholars as a legacy.

Unlike some authors, who approach Shi'ite Islam from an apologetic perspective which seeks to appease Sunni Muslims, Vittor approaches Shi'ism from a position of strength, examining the religious tradition independently, in and of itself, from within, and on its own terms. He makes no apologies for Shi'ite beliefs and practices and does not compromise on questions of principle. Unlike some overly enthusiastic authors, Vittor does not exalt Shi'ism at the expense of Sunnism. As an honest, objective, and open-minded academic, he treats both of his subjects with respect, viewing them in complement rather than opposition: there would be no Shi'ism without Sunnism, and there would be no Sunnism without Shi'ism.

When engaging in inter-Islamic dialogue, it is important to respect the sensibilities of one's target audience. In every instance, those who speak for Shi'ism should avoid negative marketing, which focuses on belittling one's adversary, as opposed to positive marketing, which focuses on the qualities of your candidate. Extremist sources which attack *ahl al-sunnah* only serve to drive Sunnis away from Shi'ite Islam. As such, casting doubt on the character of the Prophet's Companions in order to replace them with the Twelve Imams is a misguided effort of marketing. The Imams themselves criticized such comportment. Rather than make value judgments, it is often better to allow the historical sources to speak for themselves. Rather than attacking individuals and beliefs, Shi'ites should speak exclusively about the Prophet, citing the Qur'anic verses and *ahadith* in favor of the *ahl al-bayt*. Presented properly, by means of an intelligent,

¹²³ This critically important call for Islamic unity was published as an introductory study in the second edition of Luis Alberto Vittor's *Shi'ite Islam: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy* (Qum: Ansariyan, 2010), as well as the first Spanish edition of the book, titled *El islam shiita: ¿ortodoxia o heterodoxia?* (Qum: Ansariyan, 2010).

tolerant, and respectful approach, the Shi'ite message is sure to have greater resonance among Sunni Muslims.

In order to guide an interested Sunni into Shi'ite Islam, all one has to do is cite the Qur'an, repeat the words of the Prophet, and demonstrate the wisdom of the Imams, and that will be sufficient. One must address issues of faith, and the importance of the *Imamah* and *wilayah*, before tackling controversial issues from the early days of Islamic history. Once a person is open to the divine authority, everything else will fall into place, and then, and only then, are individuals interested in Shi'ism ready to deal with Tijani's informative works. In our experience, works like *Then I was Guided, Ask those who Know, To be with the Truthful*, and *The Shi'ah are (the Real) Ahl al-Sunnah* have an important place, but not necessarily in the first line of *da'wah*.

Many Shi'ite Muslims seem to forget that *taqiyyah* is a form of tact and every educational endeavor must proceed by stages. As Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq has said, "This affair (*amr*) [the Imamate and the esoteric meaning of religion] is occult (*mastur*) and veiled (*muqanna'*) by a covenant (*mithaq*), and whoever unveils it will be disgraced by Allah" (Kulayni). Certain things are better left unsaid when dealing with people who are potential enemies of *ahl al-bayt*. As Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq warned:

Keep our affair secret, and do not divulge it publicly, for whoever keeps it secret and does not reveal it, Allah will exalt him in this world, and put light between his eyes in the next, leading him to Paradise...Whoever divulges our affair publicly, and does not keep it a secret, Allah will disgrace him in this world and will take away light from between his eyes in the next, and will make it for him darkness that will lead him to the Fire...*Taqiyyah* is of my religion, and of the religion of my fathers, and who does not observe *taqiyyah* has no religion...It is necessary to worship in secret and it is necessary to worship openly...the one who reveals our affairs is the one who denies them. (Kulayni)

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq also condemned those who spread the secrets of *wilayat Allah* among the common people, saying: "Our secret continued to be preserved until it came into the hands of the sons of Kaysan and they spoke of it on the roads and in the villages of the Sawad" (Kulayni).

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq warned his Shi'ites to: "Fear for your religion and protect it (lit. veil it) with *taqiyyah*, for there is no faith in whom there is no *taqiyyah*" (Kulayni). He also advised his followers to: "Mix with the people (i.e., enemies) outwardly, but

oppose them inwardly so long as the Emirate is a matter of opinion” (Saduq). The Imam always avoided controversy and conflict, saying: “Verily, when I hear a man abusing me in the mosque, I hide myself behind a pillar so that he may not see me” (Saduq). On one occasion, Zakariyya ibn Sabiq was enumerating the Imams in the presence of Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq. When the Companion reached the name of Muhammad al-Baqir, the Imam interrupted him and said, “That is enough for you. Allah has affirmed your tongue and has guided your heart” (Kulayni). The Imam also said that “Verily, diplomacy (*al-riya’*) with a true believer is a form of *shirk* (polytheism); but with a hypocrite in his own house, it is worship” (Saduq). These traditions are not saying that Shi‘ite Muslims should not be sincere, and that they form some sort of secret esoteric sect. They are simply saying that they should not be stupid, and that they should only share their beliefs with a receptive audience in order to avoid provocation and enmity.

Rather than promote division and conflict, Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq urged Shi‘ites to pray with Sunnis: “He who prays with them standing in the front row, it is as though he prayed with the Prophet in the first row” (Saduq). The Imam also encouraged Shi‘ites to treat Sunnis as their brethren: “Visit their sick, attend their funerals, and pray in their mosques” (Saduq). Since the improper behavior of followers reflects poorly on their leader, the Imam told his followers to “Become an ornament for us, and not a disgrace” (Saduq). He also called upon his Shi‘ites to encourage goodwill among all Muslims, saying, “May Allah have mercy on a person who inculcates friendship towards us among men, and does not provoke ill-will among them” (Saduq). This Shi‘ite spirit of Islamic unity was shown by ‘Allamah Sharaf al-Din al-Musawi who ruled that the Shi‘ites of Lebanon should celebrate the birth of the Prophet on the same day as the Sunnis. Imam Khumayni took this a step further by declaring Islamic Unity week.

In twenty years of Islamic activism, we have observed that works like *al-Muraja‘at* by ‘Allamah al-Musawi, which are calm, courteous, gentle, and convincing, are far more effective than caustic criticism. We have also found that the most effective tools in Shi‘ite *da‘wah* are the works of the Imams themselves, *Nahj al-balaghah* by Imam ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, the *Sahifah al-sajadiyyah* by Imam ‘Ali Zayn al-‘Abidin, the *Lantern of the Path* by Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq, as well as other biographical books such as *The Book of Guidance* by Shaykh al-Mufid, which demonstrate the depth of knowledge of the Imams, as well as their profound wisdom, and piety.

Many Shi‘ite Muslims would be well advised to live what they learn, to exhibit the true characteristics of followers of *ahl al-bayt*, to live according to Islam, and to lead

by example. The best converts to Shi'ite Islam never received a book. They were moved by the piety of Shi'ite Muslims, and their devout love and attachment to the Prophet and his family. It should also be understood that the formal spreading of Islam is *wajib kifayah*; it is the obligation of certain members of the community, and should be left to the knowledgeable, competent, and qualified. The Prophet and the Imams warned us not to argue with the ignorant. In order to ensure that Islam was rightly represented, the Twelve Imams trained Muslim missionaries to propagate the faith properly.

As any business professor can explain, attacking a rival is never good marketing. An advertiser should never point out the faults of others. It is not permitted in the best of mediums and is never good policy. The selfish purpose is always evident. It is unfair, impolite, unbefitting of a Muslim, and counter-Qur'anic. As Almighty Allah says, "Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way" (16:125). The Most High has also said, "Revile not those who invoke other than Allah, lest wrongfully they revile Allah through ignorance" (6:108). If Muslims must not mock the beliefs of polytheists, the prohibition is even greater when it comes to the beliefs of other Muslims.

While negative advertising has some advantages, it can evoke aggressive responses towards the source of the advertising. While it can motivate base support, verbal assaults against the opponent can alienate non-sectarian Muslims and outrage committed Muslims from the other camp, radicalizing rhetoric. What is worse, negative advertising often produces a backlash, which can result in violence, destruction, and death. While some Sunnis and Shi'ites may pledge to refrain from negative marketing when discussing their differences, the pledge is often soon abandoned when the opponent is viewed as "going negative," inciting a series of retaliatory remarks.

Negative advertising is also entirely un-academic. Campaigners from one camp present twisted or spun information under the guise of bringing hidden negatives into the light. Such individuals have no place in the Sunni-Shi'ite debate as they have the wrong intention from the onset. Their goal is not to unite, but to divide. They come to the table with a closed mind. They are not genuinely interested in inter-Islamic dialogue. They prepare their cases like lawyers. They are concerned with winning the case, rather than searching for truth. They concentrate on being quick, witty, and winning the argument, rather than analyzing the issues at hand. They use rhetorical devices such as straw man or red herring arguments to insinuate that an opponent holds a certain idea.

The Sixth Imam was highly critical of the superfluous debates of skilful verbal gymnasts: “When you debate, the nearer you are to truth and tradition on the authority of the Prophet, the further you are from it: you mix up the truth with what is false. A little truth suffices for what is false” (Mufid). Without a judge or moderator to keep parties disciplined, Sunni-Shi‘ite debates soon degenerate into slander, libel, and defamation of character. Such efforts are of no benefit to the Islamic Ummah as they increase tension between the Sunni and Shi‘ite communities.

The very idea of “debate” between Sunnis and Shi‘ites is misguided as “debate” implies opposition with each party trying to defeat the other. It is foolish to believe that any party could actually “win” such a debate considering that Muslims have been polarized into two camps for nearly 1,500 years. The very idea of Sunni-Shi‘ah debate should be cast aside and replaced by inter-Islamic dialogue.

In order for Shi‘ites and Sunnis to move towards reconciliation, they need to recognize that any extreme polar position is only going to aggravate the conflict. For starters, all Muslims, Shi‘ite, Sunnis, and ‘Ibadis, must cease cursing Companions of the Prophet and cursing one another as such actions merely increase animosity. We have witnessed Salafis insult Fatimah, ‘Ali, Hasan, and Husayn; Sunni Muslims insult the *ahl al-bayt*, Twelver Shi‘ites insult the Sunni Caliphs, Isma‘ilis insult Imam Musa al-Kazim, Sufis insult Sunnis, and ‘Ibadis insult Imam ‘Ali. Surely, such behavior must cease from all sides. As Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq warned: “Do not revile them, lest they revile your ‘Ali” (Saduq). What goes around comes around, and it is time for a truce if not a treaty of perpetual peace.

As any historian of early Islam is aware, the Companions of the Prophet had their differences, cursed each other, and killed each other. Surely, the sounds of mind do not seek to perpetuate such belligerent behavior *ad-eternam*. Questions of who was right and who was wrong are a matter of personal belief. There is no need to express them openly in contexts that arouse undue emotion. When it comes to some matters, Muslims need to let differences die with those who differed.

Over the course of 1,400 years of Sunni and Shi‘ite sectarianism, positions have become polarized and differences have become deeply entrenched. Muslims need to leave a little room for ambiguity. Despite what most Muslims would like to believe, early Islamic history was not black and white, and not everything was cut and dry. Muslims need to open up to uncertainty, move from the black areas into gray areas, and creative processes will emerge.

If Shi'ites and Sunnis are sincere in seeking reconciliation, if they are honest about starting a dialogue, then they must agree to talk with respect. Both sides of the conflict need to be recognized. Both have wronged and been wronged. Muslims need refrain from belligerence and leave room for forgiveness. They need to set emotion aside or moderate it with intelligence. They need to stop trying to prove each other wrong. They must unite on the values and beliefs that they hold in common.

When outsiders look at Islam, all they see are Muslims. They do not distinguish between various sects. If they were to examine issues of '*aqidah* between the various Muslim groups, they would be hard-pressed to find grounds for division. The Sunni Muslims believe in:

Tawhid: Oneness of God

Nubuwwah/Risalah: Prophethood and Messengership

Kutub: Divinely Revealed Books

Mala'ikah: Angels

Qiyamah: The Day of Judgment

Qadar: Predestination

They are also fond of combining both faith and belief in Five Pillars of Islam, consisting of:

Shahadah: Profession of Faith

Salah: Prayer

Sawm: Fasting in Ramadan

Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca

Zakah: Alms

The Twelver Shi'ite theologians prefer to separate creed from practice, presenting two lists, the Foundations of Faith, and the Branches of Faith.

Usul al-din

Tawhid: Oneness of God

'Adl: Divine Justice

Nubuwwah/Risalah: Prophethood and Messengership

Imamah/Wilayah: Imamate or Guardianship

Qiyamah: Day of Judgement

Furu' al-din

Salah: Prayer

Sawm: Fasting in Ramadan

Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca

Zakah: Alms

Khums: Alms

Jihad: Struggle

Amr bi al-ma'ruf: Promoting good

Nahi 'an al-munkar: Forbidding evil

Tawalli: Attachment to ahl al-bayt

Tabarri: Separation from the enemies of ahl al-bayt

For all intents and purpose, the Zaydiyyah share the same beliefs of the Ithna 'Ashariyyah. The main difference between both groups is in their concept of the Imamate, and the fact that Zaydiyyah *fiqh* is closer to Sunni Hanafi and Sunni Shafi'i *fiqh*, with some elements of Shi'ah Ja'fari elements.

The Isma'iliyyah theologians have organized their beliefs into Seven Pillars of Islam, consisting of:

Wilayah: Guardianship

Taharah: Purity

Salah: Prayer

Zakah: Alms

Sawm: Fasting in Ramadan

Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca

Jihad: Struggle

'Ibadiyyah theologians have organized their beliefs into the following Five Pillars:

Tawhid: Oneness of God

'Adl: Divine Justice

Qadar: Predestination

Wilayah/Tabarri: Attachment to Muslims and separation from infidels

Amr/Nahi: Promoting good and forbidding evil; implementing the Imamate when possible.

As can be appreciated from this overview, all Muslims believe in the following articles of faith:

Tawhid: Oneness of God

Nubuwwah/Risalah: Prophets and Messengers

Qiyamah: The Day of Judgement

Although non-Sunnis do not list the divinely revealed books (*kutub*) or the angels (*mala'ikah*) in their creeds, these are fundamental aspects of beliefs for all groups. If they do not cite them as individual items, it is because they form part of the belief in God and His Prophets.

The 'Ibadiyyah and some of the Sunnis add *qadar* or predestination to their articles of faith while other groups insist on free will. Along with Shi'ite groups, the 'Ibadiyyah focus on *'adl* or divine justice, whereas some of the Sunnis insist on *qadir* or omnipotence. This difference is the result of philosophical differences in which the Sunni stress Allah's Omnipotence over His Justice, while the Shi'ites stress Allah's Justice over His Omnipotence.

In practical matters, the hierarchical differences between divine attributes are inconsequential and do not make or break a Muslim. In fact, the majority of Muslims are completely unaware of such philosophical subtleties. If a Muslim does not believe in *tawhid*, he is outside the fold of Islam. If a Muslim does not believe that Muhammad is the Final Messenger of Allah, he is outside the fold of Islam. If a Muslim does not believe in angels or in the Day of Judgement, he is outside the fold of Islam. If a Muslim prioritizes the attributes of Allah differently, he remains a Muslim: he merely follows a differently philosophical school.

The Shi'ah Ithna 'Ashariyyah, the Shi'ah Zaydiyyah, the Shi'ah Isma'iliyyah, and the 'Ibadiyyah all believe in *Imamah* although their chains of Imams are different as are their qualities, attributes, and qualifications. In many respects, the Shi'ite and 'Ibadi belief in *Imamah* is similar to the Sunni belief in *khilafah*. Whether it is an Imam or a Caliph, whether he inherits his title or is elected, whether he is a righteous leader or an infallible Imam, Sunni, Shi'ite, and even Sufi Muslims believe in some form of religious authority, both spiritual and political, which should rule the Ummah and establish the *shari'ah*.

As can be seen, all Muslims share the same creedal concepts and religious practices. They all believe in one God, the Prophethood, and the Day of Judgement. They all believe in angels and revealed books. They all pray, fast, make the pilgrimage to Mecca, and pay charity. Although the Sunnis do not list *khums*, the 20% tithe, *jihad*, promoting the good and forbidding evil, in their creed, all Sunnis accept these as religious obligations. Although the Nasibi would reject the obligation to love the Prophet's Family, and the prohibition of dealing with those who hate the Prophet's family, every true Sunni

loves and blesses the Prophet and his Family. Evidently, all true Muslims follows the *shari'ah*, be they Sunni, 'Ibadi, Shi'i Ithna 'Ashari, Shi'i Isma'ili, Shi'i Zaydi, or Sufi.

Although most Sunnis and many Twelver Shi'ites consider all the Isma'iliyyah outside the fold of Islam based on the erroneous belief that they all fail to perform *salah*, fast during the month of Ramadan, or perform the *haji*, the Isma'iliyyah as a whole cannot all be condemned as *kuffar*. The Nizari or followers of the Agha Khan, who are approximately 90% of Isma'ilis, do indeed believe that the *shari'ah* has been abrogated. Like some Sufi sects which believe Islamic law no longer applies, the Nizari are misguided and, in many regards, outside the fold of Islam. Still, as they profess the *shahadah*, they should be encouraged to mend their ways, complete the five daily prayers, fast in Ramadan, and perform the pilgrimage in order to integrate entirely into the Islamic Ummah.

It should also be remembered that there are Twelver Shi'ites, Sunnis, and Sufis who do not pray, do not fast, do not eat *halal*, and commit all sorts of *haram*, insisting that faith is sufficient for their salvation. Muslims should be careful to cast all Isma'ilis in the same light as the Agha-Khanis since the Musta'ali and their off-chute the Dawudi Bohras, who follow the Fatimid school of jurisprudence, all observe the *shari'ah* and are very close to the Ithna 'Ashari in belief and to Ja'fari jurisprudence in practice.

If there are any differences between Sunni, Shi'ite, 'Ibadi, and Sufi Muslims, they are relatively minor and revolve around aspects of religious practice. Muslims need to recognize and respect their tiny technical differences. They need to remember that jurisprudence is not a goal in and of itself but a means to a goal, namely, the remembrance of Almighty Allah. As important as proper observation of Islamic practices may be, far too many Muslims focus on the form of worship as opposed to the essence of worship.

Islamic unity certainly does not mean uniformity. It does not mean that all schools of *fiqh* [jurisprudence] should merge into one. It merely means that there is more than one "right way" to do things, and that jurists have differences of opinion, based on different interpretations of the Qur'an and Sunnah and on different methodologies. Every ruling is "right" according to the jurist who derived it. Every opinion is "correct" depending on one's point of view. All jurists agree on the issue, but they view the issue from a different perspective. One issue can be viewed as *haram*, *makruh*, and *halal* [forbidden / reprehensible / permissible]. In Islam, every issue can be seen from a 360 degree angle and there is ample room for a wide range of opinion.

Take the issue of consuming the meat of *ahl al-kitab* [People of the Book]. According to most Sunni scholars, it is permissible for a Muslim to eat meat from animals slaughtered by Christians or Jews. They base themselves on the Qur'anic verse: "The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them" (5:5). Some Sunni scholars say that while it is permissible to eat the meat of Christians and Jews, it is preferable to eat *halal* meat if available. Yet other Sunni scholars forbid the consumption of the meat of the Christians and Jews. They argue that the Christians and Jews of today are not truly "People of the Book," that they no longer slaughter animals in the name of Allah, which is a condition for the meat to be *halal*, and that there is no guarantee that the meat in non-Muslim countries was even slaughtered by a Christian or a Jew. A secular liberal, an agnostic, an atheist, a heathen, a Satanist or another unbeliever may easily have slaughtered the animal. And rather than having its throat slit in the name of Allah, it was likely killed incorrectly through an electric bolt, a gunshot, a blow to the head, a spike to the brain, a knife to the back of the skull, toxic gas or other brutal methods.

Twelver Shi'ite scholars have always been unanimous that the meat of Jews and Christians is *haram*. The reason for this position is lexical hermeneutics. As we read in Mir Ahmed 'Ali translation of the Qur'an:

According to Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq the word *ta'am* implies food made of grains not containing flesh of permitted animals. The Jews and the Christians do not follow the prescribed method of slaughtering the animals, nor do they seek Allah's pleasure before killing the animal, therefore, to eat flesh of any animal offered by them is not lawful for Muslims. "Whosoever denies faith, his deeds will be rendered useless" clearly lays down the principle that good deeds cannot be of any use unless one believes in Allah, His Messengers and guides appointed by Him, and the Day of Judgment.

According to Ayatullah Pooya Yazdi: "This verse gives permission to the Muslims to eat the food (made of grains) offered by the people of the book."

As can be seen, the Islamic attitude towards the meat of Christians and Jews ranges from *halal* to *makruh* and *haram*, which are all equally valid opinions. As *muqallidun* of *mujtahidun* [followers of jurists], Muslims are free to follow any of the rulings of their particularly *madhhab* [school of law] with confidence that they have acted correctly, complying with a valid interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

In many areas of Islamic law, differences of opinion are mainly differences of degree. These differences are a mercy and a blessing from Allah. No Muslim is obliged to submit to one set of rulings. Each Muslim is free to follow the rulings of the *mujtahid* [jurist] of his choice, to leave the *taqlid* [emulation] of one *faqih* [jurist], and to commence the *taqlid* of another he deems to be the most learned. Since all people are different, they have different levels of *din* [religion], different levels of faith, and different levels of understanding. There is no coercion when it comes to conforming to certain rulings.

In the absence of *halal* meat, a meat-loving Sunni Muslim who cannot find meaningful sustenance out of salad is free to feed himself the meat of *ahl al-kitab*. As Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, "No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear" (2:233). For another Sunni Muslim, being a part-time vegetarian while traveling in *dar al-kufr* [the land of the unbelievers] is not a hardship, and he may wish to abstain from the meat of *ahl al-kitab*. Merely because one is stricter does not make one better. Allah judges actions according to intentions and judges all people according to their intellectual abilities. As far as we are concerned, the arguments allowing the consumption of *ahl al-kitab*'s meat are weak and the Shi'ite argument is the strongest. This does not mean that we wish to impose the Ja'fari ruling on others, nor does it imply disrespect to some of the Sunni rulings. They are opinions we respect, but opinions we do not share.

When a Salafi Shaykh was asked about Nuh Ha Mim Keller's belief that the references to the "hands" of Allah mentioned in the Qur'an (38:75; 48:10; 51:47) were figurative, representing the power of God, the Shaykh said that Allah indeed has literal hands and anyone who says otherwise is a *kafir* [infidel]. This is exactly the type of outrageous behavior that is unacceptable in Islam. If the Salafiyyah wish to follow the Qur'an literally, they have the freedom to do so. They do not, however, have the right to denounce others as unbelievers because they believe the Qur'an contains allegorical and metaphorical meanings. Not only do Muslims need a lesson in moderation and tolerance, they need a lesson in basic manners.

The role of Islamic law is to set the limits of the permitted and the prohibited. When differences of opinion exist among Muslim jurists, it is the least restrictive ruling that becomes the law. If some *fuqaha'* [jurists] believe that women can show their faces and hands, and others believe that they must veil their faces, the most accommodating ruling becomes the law of the land, and veiling the face becomes an issue of personal

choice. Attempts of extremists in Afghanistan, Iraq, and abroad, to impose the most severe interpretation of the *shari'ah* have been detrimental to the public image of Islam, alienating Muslims and non-Muslims from the Islamic religion.

In closing, we would like to encourage all Muslims to unite on the basis of their common beliefs, remembering that unity does not imply uniformity. Muslims may come from various legal, theological, and philosophical traditions, but they are all one in the Oneness of God. Muslims must reject absolutist literalist attitudes and embrace a Universal Islam, becoming multi-dimensional Muslims far removed from the fundamentalist fallacy. They need to embrace Islamic pluralism and Islamic diversity in accord with the Oneness of Allah and the Qur'anic message brought by the Messenger of Allah, an Islam which includes rather than excludes, an Islam which enriches rather than impoverishes, a centrist, middle-road Islam (2:143), which opposes extremism, for as Almighty Allah says, "Do not be excessive in your belief" (4:165; 5:81).

While Islam rejects religious relativism and exoteric religious pluralism, it does accept that all revealed religions share the same esoteric spirit. Whether it is Judaism, Christianity or Islam, all revealed religions believe in One God, the Prophets, the Day of Judgment, and the Ten Commandments. However, before Muslims can unite socio-politically with the true *ahl al-kitab*, they must unite with themselves, embracing Islam as a totality, accepting the entire Islamic pie rather than a single slice. If the Europeans say, "All roads lead to Rome," we say, "All roads lead to Allah," and this is precisely what the Qur'an teaches: *Tawhid* is one, but the number of paths to Allah is equal to the number of human souls.

Chapter 20

In Response to ‘America’s Amazing Record’¹²⁴

I write in response to your article, “America’s Amazing Record” which appeared in the Nov. 23rd edition of *The Exponent* in which you describe “religious Muslims” as “terrorists” who “oppose freedom” and seek to threaten us on a very personal level. This is negative stereotyping which has no place in journalism, much less in an edition of *The Exponent* which deals with diversity.

The religion of Islam, which literally means “peace” and “submission,” categorically prohibits the killing of civilians, women, and children. As the Qur’an says: “Whosoever kills a human being...it shall be as if he had killed all of humankind, and whosoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all humankind” (5:32). As the Prophet Muhammad instructed his soldiers, “Do not kill women, children or the elderly. Do not cut down fruit-bearing trees. Do not destroy an inhabited place.”

Terrorists like the Taliban, al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi are members of the Salafi/Wahhabi sect. They are a small minority of fanatics considered heretics by the main body of Muslims. What is erroneously labeled as “Islamic” fundamentalism is a political movement, not a religious one. They are anarchists who claim to act in the name of Islam while violating every single tenet of the Muslim faith. They have been denounced as non-Muslims by Sunni, Shi’ite, and Sufi Muslims.

It is erroneous and unjust for you to label one billion Muslims, the second largest and fastest growing religion in the world, as freedom-hating terrorists on the basis of the actions of a deviated minority. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is no more a “Muslim” terrorist than Timothy McVeigh is a “Christian” terrorist. Why is it that when a so-called “Muslim” commits a terrorist act, he is denounced as a “Muslim” terrorist, and when a so-called “Christian” commits a terrorist act, he is merely called a terrorist? Why this double standard? If you want to play that game, we can call the Irish Republican Army, ETA, the Ku Klux Klan, the Aryan Nations, Hitler, the Nazis, Francisco Franco, Benito Mussolini, European colonialists, imperialists, segregationists, and racists as “Christian” terrorists.

¹²⁴ This response was published in the December 14th, 2005, edition of *The Exponent of Northern State University* (6). The work was a reaction to Leah Tetzlaff’s “America’s Amazing Record”, a piece that had appeared in the November 23rd edition of newspaper (8).

Even our “Commander in Chief,” President Bush, has made a clear distinction between Islam, Muslims, and terrorism. As he explained,

These acts of violence against innocents violate the fundamental tenets of the Islamic faith. And it’s important for my fellow Americans to understand that. The face of terror is not the true faith of Islam. That’s not what Islam is all about. Islam is peace. These terrorists don’t represent peace. They represent evil and war. When we think of Islam, we think of a faith that brings comfort to a billion people around the world. Billions of people find comfort and solace and peace. And that’s made brothers and sisters out of every race--out of every race. American counts millions of Muslims amongst our citizens, and Muslims make an incredibly valuable contribution to our country. Muslims are doctors, lawyers, law professors; members of the military, entrepreneurs, shopkeepers, moms and dads. And they need to be treated with respect. In our anger and emotion, our fellow Americans must treat each other with respect. Women who cover their heads in this country must feel comfortable going outside their homes. Moms who wear cover must not be intimidated in America. That’s not the America I know. That’s not the America I value.

The vast majority of victims of terrorism in Iraq are Muslims. Many of them have died in defense of democracy, supporting the government, cooperating with the Americans, and attempting to exercise their democratic rights. You do them a great disservice and dishonor when you make sweeping generalizations that “religious Muslims” are “terrorists.” According to the Qur’an, “If a man kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein forever: and the wrath and the curse of Allah are upon him, and a dreadful penalty is prepared for him” (4:93). How can such terrorists be “Muslims” when they are the greatest murderers of Muslims and slaughter them in mosques in the middle of prayer? As far as religious Muslims are concerned, terrorists are infidels worthy of eternal damnation. I trust we can all agree on that point.

Chapter 21

Who Needs Converts?¹²⁵

We read your editorial from the *Friday Bulletin* (January 19, 2001; Year 3) written by Prof. M. Elmasry in which he says: “While occasional converts may result from apologetics-based public debates, one must ask: ‘Is it worth it?’” Please allow us to examine a few issues, point by point.

At the beginning of his editorial he states that, for all intents and purposes, it does not make any sense to deal with issues like “Is Jesus the Son of God?” or “Is the Qur'an the True Word of God?” Evidently, it is not a coincidence that these are exactly the topics dealt by Brother Ahmed Deedat--Islamic Propagation Centre International--in Durban (South Africa) and which have been topics of video debates and publications.

It is absurd to deny the value of a debate/discussion without taking into careful consideration the social context in which it takes place. Take, for example, the case of people living in impoverished nations like Rwanda, Bangladesh or Haiti. It would be absurd to discuss whether genetically altered soya beans are good or bad when people in those countries are starving to death and wish to feed themselves any way possible. However, it is not absurd to deal with such an issue in “developed” countries.

Ahmed Deedat's approach to *da'wah* was the result of his experiences dealing with Protestant missionaries. He came to a profound understanding of the methods which they used to change the thinking of predominantly Muslim people and to lead them away from Islam. What Ahmed Deedat did was “to utilize the means of the enemy in order to combat the enemy.” As a result, he has educated Muslims, helped to stem the tide of Muslim conversions to Christianity, kept Muslims loyal to Islam, and brought many non-Muslims into the faith. Everyone should recognize that he did the right thing and that his approach has been very effective. Ahmed Deedat's public was and is a Muslim public. On the other hand, it might be considered absurd to take such an approach when dealing with people with predominantly Christian roots and beliefs. This is an issue that deserves careful consideration and which should be discussed in depth.

In his editorial Prof. Elmasry asks whether “occasional converts” are worth it. It is important to clarify what is meant by “converts” and by “occasional converts” since the sentence can be interpreted as an expression of contempt toward we who are Muslim

¹²⁵ This letter to the editor, which was co-written by Hector Manzolillo, was published in the *CIC Friday Bulletin* (Friday March 9, 2001; Year 4; Volume 4; Issue 13) and is available online at (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/muslim/message/769>).

converts/reverts. Is the author saying that converts/reverts are not worth the effort and that Muslims should not bother with such approaches? The fact of the matter is that the vast majority of English-speaking Muslim converts have been exposed, either before embracing Islam, or soon on after their conversions, to the videos and publications of Ahmed Deedat. They work. And even if only a few people took their *shahadah* as a result of watching them (which is far from the case), is it not quality as opposed to quantity that counts?

Chapter 22

Sacrifice¹²⁶

To make a sacrifice means to deprive oneself of something, to give something away for the sake of attaining a goal. It is to give away something, often precious, in order to achieve something greater. Often, the reward of that sacrifice is not found in the near future. The goal of sacrifice is purification of the self and thereafter of society. A good society is made up of good people. A corrupt society is made up of corrupt people. So in order to have a good society we must purify ourselves and make sacrifices. If we are pure, our families will be pure. Families are the basis of society; they are its pillar. You cannot build a house on a broken and rotten foundation. If you do, that house will certainly fall. And that is exactly what is happening in Western countries due to corruption. The societies of the *kuffar* and *munafiqin* are beyond repair. They must be burned to the ground and rebuilt from scratch. With the help of Allah, and with many sacrifices, we can rebuild this world and make it Islamic. The goal of sacrifice is purification and the reward of purification is Paradise.

If we look back throughout history, without our own period of time, and within our own lives, we find many kinds of sacrifices. Among the pillars of Islam we find *sawm*, fasting during the month of Ramadan. For thirty days of each year, from dawn to dusk, we deny ourselves the pleasures of life. This is sacrifice. It is to teach us discipline, control, to make our hearts sensitive to the poor and needy. It is to purify our health and to purify our souls. For some people, even eating halal is a sacrifice, because they have certain limits on what they can and cannot eat. Nevertheless, we make the effort to eat halal because it is what is best for us. As Almighty Allah says in the Qur'an: "So eat of the sustenance which Allah has bestowed upon you, lawful and good" (14:115).

Among the pillars of Islam we find the obligatory charities of Zakah and Khums. Zakah is an Arabic word meaning "to purify or to cleanse." By paying Zakah, one purifies one's wealth of impurities. One could be selfish and not pay Zakah and Khums. But those who pay them understand that it is a sacrifice and a benefit which serves to purify the self and to purify society.

Among those who have made great sacrifices are the '*ulama*', the scholars of Islam, who dedicate 10 to 15 years of their lives in order to become our mawlanas. Imam

¹²⁶ This article, published under the pseudonym "Ilyas Islam", appeared in the August 1996 edition of *Mahjubah* 15:8 (147): 26-28.

Khumayni (R.A.) discussed sacrifice in late 1972, in a lecture he gave in Najaf, Iraq, to an audience of students of the religious sciences. He told the *tulab*:

You are young, but you have sacrificed your youth in order to study the religious sciences, even though it will not greatly benefit you from a worldly standpoint. If you devote your precious time and the spring of your youth to the cause of Allah, and this sacred and precise aim, you will not lose anything. On the contrary, your welfare in this world and in the hereafter will be assured.

Among the '*ulama*' of the Shi'ah, we find an outstanding group of individuals. They are the *mujtahidun*. They are highly intelligent and dedicate *mu'minun*, who have not only dedicated themselves to 10, 15 or 20 years of study, but who have dedicated their entire lives to acquiring knowledge, teaching, and conducting research. Among them there are some who have gone even further than that. They are those who have struggled to put those teachings into practice. In Iraq, we have Ayatullah al-Uzma Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, and his

who was assassinated for wanting Muslims in Iraq to live under Islam. And of course we have Ayatullah al-Uzma Imam Ruhullah al-Musawi al-Khumayni who fought many long years, was exiled to Turkey, to Iraq, and to France, facing persecution and attempts on his life, in order to establish and lead the first Islamic State in modern history. Of course, the greatest examples of sacrifice that we have come from the lives of the *ma'sumin*.

Rasul Allah faced countless hardships and adversities in order to spread the message of al-Islam. He was insulted, cursed, accused of being a sorcerer, and he was even stoned by the ignorant inhabitants of Ta'if. We also know that conspiracies were made in order to kill the Noble Messenger of Allah. Our Imam 'Ali, was willing to give his life for the Holy Prophet. He covered himself with his cloak and laid in his bed so that the Prophet could escape to Medina. Imam 'Ali was willing to make the supreme sacrifice--to give his life for the cause of Allah--to suffer and be persecuted for the cause of Allah, and to be killed or to die for the cause of Allah. We should not be afraid to say this. Allah says in the Holy and Glorious Qur'an:

And say not of those who are slain in the way of Allah: 'They are dead.' Nay, they are living, though ye perceive it not. (2:154)

Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the Presence of their Lord; they rejoice in the Bounty provided by Allah; and with regard to those left behind, who have not yet joined

them (in their bliss), they (the martyrs) glory in the fact that on them is no fear, nor have they cause to grieve. They glory in the grace of Allah and the bounty in the fact that Allah suffereth not the reward of the faithful to be lost (in the least). (3:169-171)

And if ye are slain, or die, in the way of Allah, forgiveness and mercy from Allah are better than all they could amass. (3:157)

It is clear from these verses that this supreme sacrifice is better than anything that one could accumulate in this world. In fact, it is better than the whole world and everything in it numerous times.

The Messenger of Allah, the Members of his Family, and their followers faced all sorts of difficulties and made all kinds of sacrifices. In Mecca, many *muslimun* were tortured and murdered. They faced a boycott for many long and miserable years. Khadijah, may Allah be pleased with her, the wife of the Prophet, died during this period. She had been a great and powerful business woman. She had been successful, but died in a state of misery. She never saw Islam come to power but she sacrificed herself, to help her husband, to help Islam, and to help the holy cause of Allah. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, in verse one and two of Surah Nasr: "When comes the Help of Allah, and Victory, and thou dost see the people enter Allah's religion in crowds." This occurred in Medina. Khadijah never made it that far. But Allah's promise is true. Sacrifices may have their reward in this life, but maybe not during one's lifespan. But they certainly have their reward in the next life. And that is sufficient.

Our Prophet Muhammad made so many sacrifices. He knew what was going to happen to his Ahl al-Bayt after his death. He knew that Fatimah al-Zahra would be stripped of her inheritance, of her property of Fadak, that she would be assaulted, have a still-birth, and die a martyr. He knew that Imam 'Ali would be denied the *Khilafah*, that he would have his house burned down, and that he would be brought to the Caliph, with a rope tied around his neck, in order to force him to make the pledge of allegiance. He knew of the sacrifice of Karbala and that all the *ma'sumin* would be persecuted, make sacrifices, and be martyred. But he submitted to the will of Allah and accepted these great sacrifices for the glorious purpose of the Lord of the Worlds.

Take Imam 'Ali for instance. He was *Asadullah*, the Lion of Allah, but he sacrificed himself in order to preserve Islam. When the *Khilafah* was stolen from him after the Prophet's death, Abu Sufyan offered to gather an army to fight and defend 'Ali's right. The Imam told him that he was a hypocrite who wanted to destroy Islam then, as he

did in the past. ‘Ali submitted to the Caliphs in order for Islam to spread and become a world power. A civil war at such a crucial and unstable period would have destroyed Islam. But he had no problem swallowing his pride so that Islam could grow unimpeded.

One of the most beautiful examples we have of sacrifice is that of Imam al-Husayn, *Sayyid al-Shuhada*. The political situation in the life of the Imam was pretty much, in many ways, as it is today. They had a government and leaders that claimed to be Muslim but which were truly anti-Muslim. Yazid, the Caliph, lived in extreme luxury. He was effeminate, wore silk, committed adultery, made fun of the shari‘ah, and was well-known for his many corrupt practices. In the first year of his reign, Yazid butchered the descendants of the Most Noble Messenger. In the second year, he sacked Medina, and left his soldiers free to kill and plunder for three days. It should be noted that according to Mawlana Mawdudi, one thousand women became pregnant due to rape. In the third year, Yazid destroyed the Holy Ka‘aba. Yazid wanted to force Imam Husayn to make the pledge of allegiance to him. The Imam refused to do such a thing since that would have been like accepting the devil as God.

Imam Husayn had to leave Medina due to threats on his life. He headed to Mecca, but had to leave also, since Yazid had planned to kill him within the sacred precinct of the Ka‘aba. The day before the beginning of the Hajj, Imam Husayn decided to go in the direction of Kufah, where he had been invited by those who had been the Shi‘ahs of his father. He knew he would never make it, though, and that they would abandon him. He knew his destination was Karbala. He was asked why he was leaving Mecca just before the pilgrimage. He responded that this year, he was going to make a greater pilgrimage: a pilgrimage of blood. And that is exactly what happened.

In the desert of Karbala, Imam Husayn’s small party, which included his wives, children, relatives, and a few close companions, were surrounded by the forces of Yazid which comprised of 40,000 soldiers. They cut off the water to the Imam’s camp on the seventh day of Muharram and the torture of thirst and hunger begun. On the day of Ashura, Imam Husayn sent out his followers, one by one, to fight, kill, and die for Allah. Lastly, the Imam came out asking for water for his little baby, ‘Ali al-Asghar, who was dying of thirst. The forces of the enemy quenched the thirst of the infant with a deadly poisoned arrow that pinned the baby’s neck to the Imam’s arm. At last, when the six month old baby was killed, al-Husayn made a *du’a*, and went out into the battlefield, fought bravely, and was martyred. He was decapitated and his head brought to Yazid, who used to poke around at it, and play with it.

Imam Husayn was one of the greatest revolutionaries ever. Although he was not successful physically, he was successful spiritually and religiously. He caused an intellectual revolution and a revival of Islam. Through Imam Husayn's sacrifice many people came to realize that the Islam of the Caliphs was not the true Islam and many came into the path of Ahl al-Bayt. His uprising gave strength to many and resulted in many following his example and leading bloody rebellions against oppressors and tyrants.

Today our problem is with governments, like Saudi Arabia, who claim to be Islamic, but which have little or nothing of Islamic. As Imam Khamenei has said, our problem is with "American Islam," an Islam devoid of politics. If anyone tells you that there is no politics in Islam, then ask them: "What is more political than leading a rebellion against a government?" And that is exactly what Imam Husayn did. And for the sisters, we have an especially good example in Zaynab who was a highly intelligent and eloquent woman who did not fear to speak the truth in the face of the tyrant even though she was degraded, tortured, and abused. Imam Husayn said during his uprising against the deviations of the Umayyad:

I call you to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet... Because the Sunnah has been assassinated and heresy has been resurrected. I have not led this uprising out of joy or because of some personal dissatisfaction... I have arisen to reform the Ummah of my grandfather the Messenger of Allah, to command the good and forbid the wrong, and to follow the path of my grandfather and of my father.

We must understand who Imam Husayn was. The Holy Prophet has said: "Husayn is a part of me, and I am a part of Husayn. Allah loves those who love him." The Prophet said: "He who loves Husayn loves me, and he who hates Husayn hates me." He also said: "I am at peace with whosoever is at peace with Husayn, and I am at war with whoever is at war with him." As Imam Husayn has said: "We are the Hizbullah--the Party of Allah--which will be victorious." So let us follow the examples of the *ma'sumin*, of Imam al-Husayn, *Sayyid al-Shuhada*. Let us be ready and willing to make sacrifices, and we will be victorious. *Insha' Allah*.

Chapter 23

Keeping your Kids Safe on the Internet

The Internet is a jungle, a perilous place. You never know what is lurking behind the next link or the pop-up that just appeared. The Internet is a net, a trap, which can lure and capture even the most seasoned surfers. Considering the fact there are 4.2 million adult websites with over 372 million pornographic pages on the Internet, allowing a child to roam freely in its realm is frankly foolhardy. While the Internet contains many valuable resources, it is fraught with danger. In order to keep your children safe, you need to be aware, control your computer, and follow some simple steps.

Most parents assume that their children are innocent and that they would never look for adult material. According to Family Safe Media, however, the largest group of viewers of Internet porn is children between the ages of 12 and 17. Everyday there are 68 million search engine requests for porn, representing a total of 25% of the material accessed on the internet, the majority of which is made by young people. According to a New Zealand Internal Affairs Study, the largest single age group viewing child pornography is young people between 15 to 19, accounting for a quarter of the 202 convicted child porn users. The *Washington Post* reported in July 1st 2004, that more than 11 million teens regularly view porn online. Even if your teens don't look for porn, unless you take the proper precautions, it will come looking for them in the form of pop-up ads designed to deceive and misdirect surfers to adult sites. The Kaiser Family Foundation found that among teens online, 70% have accidentally come across pornography on the web. According to a study conducted by the London School of Economics, nine out of ten children aged 8-16 have viewed porn on the Internet, mostly unintentionally, after having searched for an innocent sounding word while looking for information or pictures.

Many adult sites have addresses which are based on typos of common websites such as dissneychannel.com, cartoonnetawork.com, neopetts.com, musicplus.com, and thousands of others, each deliberately attempting to expose children to pornography. For example, the typo hotmale.com leads to a hard-core gay porn site instead of the popular e-mail provider hotmail.com. Many sites for children, which are entirely legitimate, are surrounded by such typo-squatters, websites which link directly or indirectly to adult sites. In order to avoid such unpleasant and potentially traumatizing surprises, parents can install Strider URL Tracer with Typo Patrol to block squatting domains that serve adult

ads on typos of children's web sites. Another approach used by pornographers is the use of spam, mass e-mails directed to hundreds, thousands, and even millions of e-mails at once. According to Jerry Ropetalo's "Internet Pornography Statistics," 2.5 billion pornographic e-mails are sent every day, representing 8% of the total mail received. In some cases, clicking on such links merely leads to some adult site. In the worst of cases, and if you don't have an updated anti-virus program, the site may install malicious spy software and Trojan horses on your computer, effectively taking control of your browser, linking it incessantly to other adult sites, adding toolbars, and banner ads. According to a study reported in *Youth and Society*, in 26% of cases where youth accidentally stumbled into pornographic websites, the youth stated being exposed to another sex website when they were attempting to exit the initial website.

In order to reduce the likelihood of adult material reaching your children via e-mails or pop-ups, it is important to install anti-virus software like Norton or McAfee and to ensure that the virus definitions are kept up to date. For any e-mail account, it is important to select a filter to block and discard unwanted emails. The security level for any internet browser should be set at least at medium, which is safe, yet still functional. For even more safety, filtering programs like Content Protect, Cyber Sitter, Net Nanny, Cyber Patrol, Filter Pak, Cyber Sentinel, McAfee Parental Controls, Cyber Snoop, or Child Safe are essential. Children are generally safe to use computers at school since twenty one states, including South Dakota, have laws requiring schools and public libraries to equip computers with filtering software or to adopt policies to restrict minors from access to obscene materials. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, however, only 25% of home computers used by teens have a filter or parental controls. Adolescents' access to sexual and reproductive health information is minimally affected by such pornography-blocking software. According to a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, only 5% of health related information was blocked out when such software is set at a moderate level while blocking 90% of adult content. These programs operate with a password, allowing parents to override the controls. It should be noted, however, that computer savvy kids are capable of by-passing these programs. No software is superior to parental supervision.

Besides surfing the web, and accessing e-mail, another danger posed to young surfers is blogs. Web sites are usually overt and openly accessible. They are like the window displays of shops on a main street. You see what's in the window and you walk in. Usually, there are no surprises. If it's an adult site, it often has a warning. You have to

agree to certain terms and conditions before entering. This is very much like a bar or an adult video store with signs on the door saying “18 and Over.” Blogs, however, can be like a numberless door down a back alley in a seedy neighborhood. You never know what you are getting into. Unlike a website, which is more easily accessible, blogs are private pages on a blog site, often accessible only by a password provided after free registration. To access a blog or forum, one needs first to find the web site and then search through it for whatever one is looking for. For many teens, having their own web site, a blog or a forum, is the in thing.

While teen girls may have always played dress up and posed as models in private, in their rooms, during sleepovers, the availability of camcorders and cell phones capable of taking digital pictures and making mini movies has turned this relatively innocent girlish behavior into a public phenomenon with such images being posted on their personal blogs. In Morocco, a conservative Muslim country, a scandal erupted regarding the Sky Blog website in which teenage girls had posted sexually provocative photos of themselves. As many of the girls were minors, and some of the images could be deemed as child pornography, they were quickly shut down by the authorities. Teenage girls must be informed that it is an image, and not a diamond, that lasts forever. Gone are the days when a picture was practically private, being difficult to duplicate and distribute. That picture that was only intended for your boyfriend--who would never dare show it to anyone--can easily be posted on the internet as a prize, or as an act of revenge for breaking up with him, becoming readily available to millions of viewers.

On a seemingly innocent note, some teens use blogs as their personal online diary. Since a diary, by nature, is sensed to be private, this very concept seems inappropriate from the onset. Teens should be made to understand the dangers of exposing the intimate details of their lives online to an ocean of strangers. By providing personal information about where they live, the school they attend, the friends they frequent, the places they go, and posting pictures of themselves, they are merely facilitating the task of stalkers and sexual predators who might attempt to contact them. According to a study by the NOP Research Group, 29% of children aged 7-17 would freely give out their home address if someone asked them online.

While teens have an overwhelming urge to chat, the telephone in the living room or kitchen, where mom and dad can overhear the general tone of the conversation, is the best place to engage in such behavior. The very worst place is the internet, via Yahoo, Google or MSN messenger. Unfortunately, the Kaiser Family Foundation reports that

chatting is the most common recreational activity young people engage in on the computer. While chatting with friends online might be fine, chatters are regularly approached by strangers, some teens just like themselves, but also others who are much older and who do not have wholesome intentions. According to Detective Chief Superintendent Keith Akerman, one in five children who use computer chat rooms have been approached over the Internet by pedophiles. A Pew Study reported in JAMA that 89% of sexual solicitations were made in either chat rooms or instant messages. According to *Online Victimization* by the NCMEC, 1 in 5 children received sexual solicitations while online; 1 in 3 received aggressive sexual solicitation involving requests to meet, followed by phone calls, mail, money or gifts. According to the Girl Scout Research Institute, 30% of teenage girls said they had been sexually harassed in a chat room. Considering the fact that 13 million youth use instant messaging, and 1 in 4 kids participates in Real Time Chat, only 25% of the youth who received sexual advances while online reported it to a parent. According to the Girl Scout Research Institute, only 30% of teenage girls informed a parent of such abuse.

There is no question that every parent has the right to know with whom their children are speaking. On the phone, this is possible. On the internet, it is impossible. All you see is a username, funny-boy, punker57 or cutiegirl39. You never quite know whether your 13 year old is talking with a classmate or a 52 year old pedophile. It is simply impossible to know since keyboards and computers are perfect means of misrepresentation. Teens are also tempted to present themselves as older than they really are. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, 31% of 7-12 graders pretend to be older to get onto websites. According to *Internet Safety: Realistic Strategies and Messages for Kids*, half of teens aged 13-18 often communicate through the Internet with strangers, one in eight youth aged 8-18 discovered that someone they were communicating with online was an adult pretending to be much younger, and one third have talked about meeting strangers they met through the Internet. These messenger services, which rely primarily on typing, can also include the use of web-cams, head-sets, and microphones, effectively functioning like a visual telephone. While it can cut down your long-distance bills drastically, the use of web cams are also conducive to cyber-sex, an activity you certainly do not want your teens to get involved in.

Finally, one of the greatest dangers to teens online is found in peer-to-peer networking, including Kazaa, eMule, BearShare, Gnutella, FileTopia, Bit Torrent, Morpheus, Shareaza, LimeWire, and numerous others. These are sites where users can

share songs, videos, and movies. While most of the songs available can be heard on the radio, the vast majority of movies being transferred from one computer to another are pornographic films, many of which are actually illicit. Unless you want your sexually repressed teenage son to become gorged on adult entertainment, it would be wise to ensure that no P2P programs are installed on your computer. Even if your child has innocent intentions, many users often disguise the names of their files. A teen may search for “Cinderella,” “Snow White,” “Mulan,” “Britney Spears” or “Lindsay Lohan” and download the file only to discover that it is pornographic material. You can be as specific as possible in each of the search criteria: Title: Disney; Type: DVD Movie; Rating: General and still receive a flood of porn, both legal and illegal, since such material represents 35% of all peer-to-peer downloads. The result of our search: 84 files on Lime Wire, a few Disney films, several children movies, some adventure and horror films, along with 14 pornographic flicks, including titles referring to lesbianism, incest, and bestiality. Even if your teens want to download a regular film, they have to filter through all this filth to find it. If your child insists he/she is only interested in downloading music, there are sites like napster.com and mp3.com which deal exclusively with music. Peer-to-peer is not even a proper place for grownups looking for “adult entertainment” as much of the material being traded is child porn. The possession of child pornography is a major crime. This is not the type of material anyone wants to inadvertently download. If parents only perused some of these programs, they would understand the perils their teens are exposed to.

Due to all these dangers which are inherent when surfing the web, it is important for parents to monitor their computers. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, however, only 23% of parents have rules about what their kids can do on the computer. The easiest way of doing this is by placing the computer, not in an office or a bedroom, but in an open, public, visible area like the kitchen or living room where parents can keep an eye on their children’s internet activities while attending to other household duties. Unfortunately, as the Kaiser Family Foundation has reported, nearly one third of 8-18 years old have a computer in their bedroom and 1 in five have an internet connection there. For some parents, controlling the computer would demonstrate a lack of trust. However, as *Family, Friends, and Community* reports, 64% of teens admit that they do things online they would not want their parents to know about. According to a poll conducted by the Girl Scout Research Institute, 85% of girls could chat online without their parents’ knowledge, 57% could read their parents’ e-mail, and 54% could conduct a

cyber relationship. As the research indicates, failing to keep an eye on one's teens is as foolish as not tying one's horse. As the Prophet Muhammad said: "Trust in God, but tie your camel" (Tirmidhi).

Supervising one's teens is not sufficient. Parents need to understand computer lingo. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 42% of parents do not review the content of what their teenagers read or type in chat rooms or via instant messaging. In fact, parents don't know the meanings of some of the most commonly used phrases. 57% don't know LOL (laugh out loud), 68% don't know BRB (be right back), and 92% don't know A/S/L (age/sex/location). 95% of parents didn't recognize the warnings teens use to notify each other that they are being watched: POS (parent over shoulder) and P911 (parent alert). When teens are typing online, the content of their messages must be monitored and when parents are not around, the computer should be locked. This means that there is no access to the start button and programs without typing a password. Creating various users with particular limitations would be a vain exercise. Even if parents blocked access to the internet for one particular user, it could easily be overcome by accessing another program, like Real Player, which in turn can access the internet.

Another particularly effective method of supervising one's children is spy software like 007 Spy Software, Remote Spy, and Personal Inspector, among many others. These programs allow you to monitor and record the activities on a computer such as web sites visited, windows opened, every key pressed (including logins and passwords for ICQ, MSN, AOL, AIM, Yahoo Messenger or web mail), applications executed, internet chats, e-mail sent, and even takes snapshots of the entire Windows desktop at set intervals. You can actually see every single thing that your child has seen while surfing the net. Most of these programs can operate in stealth mode, meaning they do not have icons and do not appear in the program list. Furthermore, most of them are totally undetectable to most anti-spy programs. While monitoring the internet activities of an adult would constitute illegal interception of personal information, minors are not subject to such laws. Keeping an eye on your teens' browsing patterns and e-mail communication is responsible parenting. While this may seem like much to some, these are actually very simple steps which can help prevent your child from getting entangled in the web.

Chapter 24

Malcolm X and the Media¹²⁷

Who can deny the power and influence the media has in shaping our opinions, views, and ways of thinking? The media has the power to glorify and to humiliate, to exalt and to destroy, and to corrupt and mutilate reality. Of the many people who have been victimized and whose vision and beliefs have been distorted by the media, the case of Malcolm X stands out clearly. Not only was he victimized in life, but also in death.

Who exactly was Malcolm X? And how is it that so many conflicting images of him exist? We shall attempt to elucidate this matter and depict the role of the media in distorting the image of the true Malcolm X. Our approach has been a holistic one. We have studied Malcolm's life in its entirety, basing ourselves on his autobiography, articles, studies, and various films. Furthermore, we have examined his speeches extensively. All of this information gives us a fairly good idea of exactly who Malcolm X was, and the influence the media had in shaping the various contradictory images of him.

When we examine the life of Malcolm X, one thing stands out clearly: Malcolm X was a man of change. As a teenager and a young man, Malcolm was a slave of himself: a slave to his lower animal instincts. He was a hustler, a pimp, a drug-dealer, a thief, a womanizer, and a drug-addict. His life of crime led to his imprisonment for ten years. While in prison, where he had been nicknamed "Satan," he was introduced to the teachings of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. On the basis of his experiences with white people, Malcolm came to accept the Nation of Islam's racial doctrine and became a Black Muslim.

After much struggle, self-discipline, and study, Malcolm was able to educate and reform himself. After his release from prison, he became a Black Muslim Minister and served the Nation of Islam for the next twelve years. During this period of time, Malcolm was essentially the slave of the black man and of Elijah Muhammad. Malcolm said of that phase in his life:

I guess it would be impossible for anyone to fully realize how complete was my belief in Elijah Muhammad. I believed in him not only as leader in the ordinary human sense, but I believed in him as a divine leader. I believed he had no

¹²⁷ This article, which was published under the *nom de plume* of Angélica Islam, appeared in the November 1995 edition of *Mahjubah* 14:11 (138): 50-52.

human weaknesses or faults, and that, therefore, he could make no mistakes and that he could do no wrong.

Malcolm eventually abandoned Elijah Muhammad's teachings and became an orthodox Muslim. His pilgrimage to Mecca enabled him to realize that not all whites were devils and that under Islam true brotherhood could exist. Hence, he rejected many of his previous positions. Concerning Elijah Muhammad's teachings and his new perspective, Malcolm said:

I've had enough of someone else's propaganda. I'm for truth, no matter who tells it. I'm for justice, no matter who it is for or against. I'm a human being first and foremost, and as such, I'm for whoever and whatever benefits humanity as a whole.

This period as a servant of Allah did not last long. Malcolm, now al-Hajj Malik al-Shabazz, was brutally assassinated shortly thereafter.

Those white supremacists, black nationalists and Communists who claim that Malcolm somehow justified their ideologies conveniently forget Malcolm's conversion to orthodox Islam and the major changes that occurred in him as a result of his pilgrimage to Mecca. When Malcolm X was a follower of Elijah Muhammad, he promoted the latter's ideas concerning the "separation of the races" and that blacks should "return to Africa" or have their own "black states" within America.

Essentially, this was the very same thing white supremacists wanted. Malcolm, on Elijah's orders, met with and signed a peace treaty with the Ku Klux Klan. The white supremacists that use Malcolm to justify their ideology do so on Malcolm's Nation of Islam phase. They conveniently ignore that Malcolm was disgusted by such an act and that this was one of the reasons that made him drift away from Elijah Muhammad's teachings. After breaking off with the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X vowed to organize black guerrillas to defend blacks in the southern states and to take offensive action against white racists.

The Malcolm X glorified by black nationalists is based on Malcolm's Nation of Islam days. They get some kind of ego boost by the harsh way Malcolm used to refer to whites. Again, they conveniently ignore that Malcolm X rejected his previous position. Two days before his assassination, commenting about his long years of promoting Elijah Muhammad's teachings, he said: "That was a mad scene. The sickness and the madness of those days! I am glad to be free of them."

Malcolm X categorically rejected the Nation of Islam's racial doctrine and wholeheartedly embraced true Islam. These facts stand out clearly in the last two chapters of his autobiography, and in his last speeches. Malcolm made it explicitly clear to Alex Haley (the writer of Malcolm's autobiography) that he had found the perfect system in Islam. This, by itself, categorically denies any truth to the claims that Malcolm X was an advocate of Communism. What he was, though, was open-minded and supportive of the struggles of the oppressed of the Earth. He was definitely anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist, but that does not make one a Communist. Malcolm never stood up and declared, "I am a Communist!" But, he repeatedly declared that, "I am a Muslim!" What he did acknowledge, however, was that most peoples who had freed themselves from colonialism had chosen a Socialist model for their new society. It was a comment, not a profession of faith. As we have shown here, many groups pick and choose sayings of Malcolm to justify their ideologies. However, they will never examine Malcolm holistically, for by doing so, the truth would stand out clearly.

Malcolm X is considered to be the first person to truly understand the power and impact of the mass media. Although the media tried to depict him as a hate-preacher and a black demagogue, he was able to surpass such images, even though he cherished them. What we mean is that the media wanted to project him in a certain way with bad intentions. What Malcolm was able to do was to twist around that projection, exploit it, and make it benefit himself and the cause of black people. The true ideas of Malcolm X are in much greater now than when he was alive, for when he was alive, he was able to defend himself, and his ideas, but now that he is dead, he is unable to respond to false allegations.

Half of Spike Lee's movie deals with Malcolm's criminal career and a blown-out of-proportion relationship with some insignificant white woman. It is preposterous that half of the film would be dedicated to a period of time in Malcolm's life that only lasted for two years. The film has failed to mention much more facts about the real Malcolm X. In his autobiography, Malcolm mentions his travels to Africa and the support he received from numerous heads of state for his plan to take the United States to the United Nations' court in order to face trial for its mistreatment and human rights abuses against American blacks. The movie fails to mention that Malcolm X had visited guerrilla training camps in Algeria and that he was making arrangements to have African Americans trained there so that they could defend blacks in the southern United States against the violence of white

racists, and to take offensive action against the Ku Klux Klan. Malcolm also had strong ties with Cuba. Fidel Castro came to visit him in Harlem.

Contrary to the film, which portrays Malcolm as a careless father and someone who had no time to spend with his family, he was in reality a caring and affectionate father. In order to understand who Malcolm X was, people must know this important information. Young blacks consider Malcolm as a hero on their baseball caps and t-shirts, but do they really know who they are supporting? The fact of the matter is the Malcolm that they are projecting is the pre-Mecca Malcolm and they seem to be completely (or deliberately) ignorant of the fact that Malcolm changed and that there was a post-Mecca Malcolm who was very different.

Malcolm X was certainly victimized by the media in his life and in his death. Different groups with different interests have attempted to distort his message to suit their particular ideological plans. Those who are still caught up with Malcolm's Nation of Islam days are precisely those who understand him the least. Anyone who studies Malcolm's life and does not learn that Malcolm was a man of change who was in a constant evolution has not learned a thing from him. One cannot take the Malcolm from one particular period of time and say, "This is what Malcolm X was!" What we must accept, though, is Malcolm's climax: his final ideological position, and the one for which he died. That position was Islam, and his tombstone bears witness to this fact. He was not buried as "Malcolm X" but as "El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz," as a new man, as a Muslim.

Chapter 25

A Comparative Study of the *Song of Roland*, the *Poem of the Cid*, and the *Rawdah Khani*¹²⁸

Introduction

Literature is the reflection of a society. Studying the literature of a particular people or period provides us with a privileged insight into that time, including social conditions and prevalent ideas. Literature allows us to penetrate into the collective mentality or psychology of a society or a specific segment thereof. It allows us to understand the worldview of the people who produced it in a way that is far more concrete and profound than history books permit. According to some scholars, nations in formation need to create an identity for themselves (Moignet 7). For some, this need is the propelling force at the origin of epic poems, works which glorify historical or fictitious characters and their actions. These protagonists of these epics embody the ideals and values of a people. In the cases when epics deal with historical figures, the qualities of the protagonists are exaggerated and historical events are distorted. While it is possible that not all epic poems respond to a people's need to create an identity for itself, this certainly seem to be the case for the *Song of Roland*, the *Poem of the Cid*, and the *Rawdah Khani*, that combination of sermons, poems, Qur'anic verses, and drama which depict the events leading to the tragic death of Imam Husayn. If we examine these three works, we note numerous parallel elements as well as some marked differences. In the following pages, we propose to present a comparative analysis of these different elements accompanied by a socio-cultural commentary.

¹²⁸ This article was originally published in French as "Étude comparée de la *Chanson de Roland*, le *Poema de mio Cid* et le *Rawdah-Khani*" in *Le Message de l'Islam* 115 (Juin 1994): 32-39. It is published here for the first time in English. The original French version included the following preface, which we provide here in English translation:

One of our readers has forwarded us the following article in which he compares the song of Roland and the poem of the Cid, both of which are epic poems, with the elegies regarding the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, blessed be he and his companions. Naturally, the elegies do not exaggerate events as national epics do. They content themselves with faithfully transmitting the religious epic in order to revive the religion of God. Imam Husayn, may he be blessed, the grandson of the Prophet of Islam, refused to pay allegiance to Yazid, the corrupt ruler of the period. As a result of his martyrdom, he prevented the decline of Islam. Had he paid allegiance to Yazid, the true teachings of Islam may have been forgotten, replaced by innovations such as the consumption of alcohol, adultery, and so forth, among Muslims. In short, they would resemble the Christians and the Jews who no longer follow the teachings of their holy books. By his martyrdom, Imam Husayn, blessed be he, reestablished authentic Islam and it is thanks to him that Muslims continue to conform to the laws of their religion.

Structure

The French *Song of Roland*, the Spanish *Poem of the Cid*, and the Arabic-Persian *Rawdah Khani* all share a similar structure and development. All three medieval works revolve around the final period in the life of the protagonist. The first part of these works is devoted, more or less, to the exile of the main character. In the case of the *Song of Roland*, the protagonist is located in Spain, far from his sweet France, where he is a participant in the military expeditions of Charlemagne. Hence, the case of Roland does not seem to be an involuntary exile. As regards the *Poem of the Cid* and the *Rawdah Khani*, the protagonists are exiled as a result of a grave injustice. The Cid, Ruy Díaz de Vivar, is the victim of a plot. To be precise, the enemies of the Cid convinced King Alfonso VI that he had acted against the interests of His Majesty (PMC: Chapter 3). The Cid is thus obliged, under threat of torture and death, to leave Christian lands (PMC: Chapter 4). Imam Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad and the Third Shi'ite Imam, found himself in a similar situation. He had to leave Medina, and after that Mecca, because the Caliph Yazid had decided to have him assassinated (Tabatabai 158). The second part of these works is, more or less, dedicated to combat. In the *Poem of the Cid*, the Cid participates in numerous battles. In the *Song of Roland*, and the *Rawdah Khani*, however, the protagonists participate in but a single battle: Roland, in the battle of Roncevaux, and Imam Husayn in the battle of Karbala, both of which led to their deaths. The third part of these three epic works is devoted to the quest for justice. In the *Song of Roland*, Charlemagne and his army invade Spain in order to avenge the attack suffered by their rear-guard. Although the Cid does not die in battle, he was compelled to recover his lost honor as a result of the torture and humiliation that his two young daughters had suffered at the hands of his treacherous sons-in-law. As part of his quest for justice, the Cid brings the *Infantes* or Princes of Carrión to court in order to face the King. In the *Rawdah Khani*, it is the members of the family of Imam Husayn, especially his sister Zaynab, who confronted the Caliph, not in order to receive justice at his hands, but to publicly denounce him for the unspeakable atrocities he had committed.

Out of the three works, the structure and plot of the *Poem of the Cid* and the *Rawdah Khani* resemble each other the most. According to Francisco Marcos Marin, the *Poem of the Cid* shares many similarities with Arab literary works (19-20, 36, 45-46). One such aspect is the journey as the main thread of the plot (45). In many regards, the plot of the *Poem of the Cid* resembles the structure of the *Sirat 'Antar* or *The Life of 'Antar* (44-46). While the *Song of Roland* contains some Arab elements, the *Poem of the*

Cid presents a perfect case of Arabic influence (20, 45). If the structure and plots of these works contain many similar elements, they also share numerous events.

The Events

A common element, found in both the *Poem of the Cid* and the *Rawdah Khani*, is the departure of the protagonist, something which is absent from the *Song of Roland*. The first thing that the Cid and Imam Husayn do before leaving is to inform their family members of their plight. After having explained to his family and friends that the king had expelled him, giving him nine days to leave Christian territory, the Cid tells them: “Friends! I would like to know which one of you will accompany me. God will be pleased with those who follow me. As for those who stay behind, I wish to leave them on good terms” (verses 0.4-0.5). Alvar Fañez responds:

We are with you, O Cid! We shall accompany you through waste land and villages. We will never abandon you so long as you are alive and healthy. We will accompany you with our mules and our horses and we will make good use of them. We will bring with us our goods and our clothing. We will remain loyal to you as your friends and vassals. (verses 0.5)

Finally, when the Cid left, we read that: “His eyes were crying abundantly. He turned his head, and continued to watch them. He sighed, as he was very worried, and said confidently, ‘O Father who art in Heaven. I thank you for all of your blessings. This is the results of the plot of my enemies’” (verses 1-9). Later, we read the declaration made by Martín Antolínez, who said:

O hero! Your birth was auspicious. We shall leave tomorrow after you have slept. I will be condemned for having served you. I will incur the wrath of King Alfonso. If I escape with you safe and sound, sooner or later, the King will want me as a friend. If not, I could not care less about what I leave behind. (verses 71-77)

All of these elements resemble those found in the *Rawdah Khani* but with some variations. Prior to leaving Medina, Imam Husayn did not invite anyone to follow him. He was simply going to be accompanied by a divinely preordained group of family members, friends, and companions, which had been mentioned to him by his grandfather, the Prophet Muhammad. Imam Husayn had been approached by a delegation from the Shi‘ites of Medina who wanted to persuade him not to leave their city. Imam Husayn explained to them that he had no other option but to leave. As the Caliph Yazid had declared, he would behead Imam Husayn if he refused to pay allegiance to him. There is,

indeed, a farewell in the *Rawdah Khani*, but in a different context than that which is found in the *Poem of the Cid*. Another similarity between both works can be found in the prayers they recite prior to setting off on their journeys. While the Cid recited a personal prayer, Imam Husayn recited the Qur'anic verse, "Deliver me from the evil doers" (28:21), prior to leaving Medina.

During the four and a half months that Imam Husayn spent in Medina, he made numerous speeches in order to "stir up public opinion" and in order to "incite the Muslims to revolt" (Dar al-Towhid 66). It is in this context that we find declarations which resemble those made by Alvar Fañez and Martín Antolínez, including, "By God! You will not engage in battle without us also engaging in battle. And you will not face a difficulty which we will not face ourselves. By God! We will defend you with our swords and we will protect you with our lives." The Companions of Imam Husayn also asserted, "We will not remain indifferent if you are angry, nor will we remain behind if you leave. The matter is in your hands. Call us, and we will respond. Order us, and we will obey you" (al-Towhid 65).

Another highly importance theme found in the *Song of Roland*, the *Poem of the Cid*, and the *Rawdah Khani* is that of betrayal. Roland is the victim of a plot orchestrated by his father-in-law Ganelon. The Cid is betrayed by his enemies. And Imam Husayn is betrayed by the Iraqis who had promised to mobilize their troops to defend him, something they failed to do, abandoning his small band of 90 people, including women and children, to face an imperial army composed of 30,000 soldiers (Tabatabai 160; Lalljee 108).

The French, Spanish, and Arabic epics contain many other similarities. Both the *Song of Roland* and the *Rawdah Khani* contain a scene in which a companion of the protagonist demonstrates a great deal of courage, love, and devotion for his liege. In the *Song of Roland*, we find the scene of archbishop Turpin who does everything possible in order to bring water to Roland. As we read,

When the Archbishop beheld him swoon, Rollant,
Never before such bitter grief he'd had;
Stretching his hand, he took that olifant.
Through Rencesvals a little river ran;
He would go there, fetch water for Rollant.
Went step by step, to stumble soon began,
So feeble he is, no further fare he can,

For too much blood he's lost, and no strength has;
Ere he has crossed an acre of the land,
His heart grows faint, he falls down forwards and
Death comes to him with very cruel pangs. (Verses 2222-2232)

This scene greatly resembles the behavior of 'Abbas, the brother of Imam Husayn. As we read in the *Rawdah Khani*,

The cries for water raised by the children in Imam Husayn's camp on the day of 'Ashura deeply grieved 'Abbas. After taking permission from Imam Husayn, he took the empty water-bag of Sakina, the daughter of Imam Husayn, and rode off towards the river Euphrates. Cutting through the rank and file of Yazid's army, he rushed to the bank of the river, filled the bag with water, and started towards the camp. Yazid's army encircled the gallant 'Abbas. He kept the water-bag in one hand, and started fighting with the other. When both his hands were severed, he gripped the water-bag strap with his teeth. The severe blow from a mace on his head shook him badly. He fell from his horse, and called onto Imam Husayn. Imam Husayn reached him with great difficulty, and placed his head on his lap. 'Abbas then opened his eyes to cast a look on the Holy Imam's face, and breathed his last. (Lalljee 143)

In the French, Spanish, and Arabic epics, we find a group of soldiers who, at a given moment, find themselves in a position of weakness when faced by superior forces. In the *Song of Roland* and the *Rawdah Khani*, the protagonists embraced inevitable death. The three epics are action packed and describe battles full of fantastic elements. There are instances in which a single person kills hundreds of enemy soldiers in combat. The *Song of Roland* offers a reference to Archbishop Turpin who kills four hundred "pagans" with his sword (161). In the *Poem of the Cid*, we have numerous examples of Shi'ites who kill a large number of enemies before dying. There is the case of 'Ali Akbar, the son of Imam Husayn, who killed one hundred soldiers before succumbing to his wounds.

In each of these epics, the minority party demonstrates a great deal of courage. In the *Song of Roland* and the *Rawdah Khani*, soldiers enter battle one by one in order to combat the enemy. The protagonist is always the last one to enter battle. At the beginning of the battle, Roland had an army of 20,000 Franks. Soon, they were reduced to 60 souls. It is for this reason that the remaining soldiers entered battle one by one, an element which creates a great deal of suspense. Interestingly, the final group of Franks to face

their enemies was approximately the same size as the number of Shi'ite soldiers who entered battle, one after another, in order to defend Imam Husayn.

Both the *Song of Roland* and the *Rawdah Khani* mention miraculous events which take place after their respective heroes are killed. Regarding the death of Roland, we read,

His right-hand glove, to God he offers it
Saint Gabriel from's hand hath taken it.
Over his arm his head bows down and slips,
He joins his hands: and so is life finish'd.
God sent him down His angel cherubin,
And Saint Michael, we worship in peril;
And by their side Saint Gabriel alit;

So the count's soul they bare to Paradis. (verses 2389-2396)

According to the *Rawdah Khani*, the head of Imam Husayn started to glorify God after it had been cut off and raised on the point of a lance, crying *Allahu Akbar* or "Allah is the Greatest" (Lalljee 109). Although no similar events are related in the *Poem of the Cid*, Spanish oral tradition has passed down a legend which asserts that, after his death, the Cid appeared riding on a white horse.

Another parallel element between the three epics relates to the plight of the women and family members of the protagonists. In the *Chanson de Roland*, we have the case of the young Aude who died upon learning of the death of her husband (v. 3723). In the *Rawdah Khani*, the wives and the survivors from Imam Husayn's family are taken captive, subjected to public humiliation, as well as imprisoned and tortured by Caliph Yazid's forces of repression (Zakir chapters 9-12; Dar al-Tawhid 112-114; Tabatabai 160). Rather than take place after the death of Roland, similar events take place at the end of his life. In the *Poem of the Cid*, the wife and daughters of the main character spend several years as virtual prisoners under house arrest in the monastery of Cardeña (verses 330-365; 1276).

A final event which is shared by the Spanish, French, and Arabic epics revolves around the veneration of the corpses of the deceased. The bodies of Roland, Olivier, and Turpin were buried in Blaye (verses 3689-3691). The remains of Imam Husayn and his Shi'ites were buried in the plain of Karbala. The body of the Cid was buried in Valencia until the city was re-conquered by the Almoravids in 1102 after which Doña Jimena had her husband's remains relocated to the monastery of Cardeña in Burgos (Marín 173).

Blaye, Karbala, and Burgos all became sacred pilgrimage sites. It is also worth mentioning that the painful separation between Roland and Olivier, when the latter dies, greatly resembles the painful farewell between Imam Husayn and his son 'Ali Akbar. It is therefore evident that, from the point of view of the events, there is a great deal of similarity between the *Song of Roland*, the *Poem of the Cid*, and the *Rawdah Khani*. Such is the case when we closely compare the characters from these three famous epic poems.

The Characters

The Cid, Ruy Díaz, was only an *infanzón*, a low ranking member of the nobility (Marín 46). Roland, on the other hand, “was the product of an incestuous relationship between Charlemagne and his sister” (Moignet 45). In an Islamic context, it is difficult to speak about “social classes” and “nobility” as Islam does not judge people on the basis of their genealogy, but rather, on the basis of their behavior (Qur'an 49:13). What we can say, however, is that Imam Husayn was a *Sayyid*, namely, a direct descendant of the Prophet. As such, he was a member of the most prestigious family. The three protagonists from the three epics were all married: the Cid with Doña Jimena, Roland with Aude, and Imam Husayn with several wives. As one can imagine, these main characters were all handsome, strong, and brave. Imam Husayn had a white horse and the Cid, according to a legend, was seen riding on a white horse after his death. Since Roland rode many different horses at the battle of Roncevaux, we cannot speak of a specific color of steed in his case. In the case of the Cid and Husayn, however, the white colored horses they ride represent the spiritual purity of their riders. In each of the three epics, horses and swords have names. The names of the swords in the *Poem of the Cid* and the *Song of Roland* are all of Arabic origin (Marín 20). Both the Cid and Imam Husayn had beards. In fact, the Cid had sworn that he would not shave his beard until he had recovered his honor. For the Cid, his beard was the symbol of his honor. For Shi'ite Muslims, the beard is a religious obligation, a spiritual symbol, a type of veil, and the emblem of masculinity, virility, and honor. While it appears that Roland did not have a beard, there are numerous allusions to the long white beard of Charlemagne who had lived for so long (verses 117; 1843; 3712). It is interesting to note that Imam Husayn's beard became completely white as a result of the pain and grief he suffered at Karbala (Zakir 65). The Cid, Roland, and Imam Husayn were all outstanding knights and horsemen.

The three protagonists are presented as perfect men possessing every quality imaginable. As we read in the *Song of Roland*, “The count Rollanz has never loved cowards / Nor arrogant, nor men of evil heart, / Nor chevalier that was not good vassal”

(verses 2134-2136). According to the *Poem of the Cid*, Ruy Díaz de Vivar was generous, noble, intelligent, faithful, and religious, not to mention his many other qualities. It is important to note that the historical Cid was a relatively tolerant man who did not appear to have any prejudices. In fact, he had many Muslim friends, and was as willing to serve Muslim kings as he was willing to serve Christian ones. As regards Imam Husayn, it suffices to mention that Shi'ite consider him to be *ma'sum* or "infallible." As such, he is a perfect example, a person who has reached "the highest degree of human perfection" thanks to the grace of God (Tabatabai 173). Charlemagne, on the other hand, is emperor "Deo gratia."

The three protagonists all have a religious dimension. The religious aspect of Roland manifests itself in the person of Archbishop Turpin who recites several prayers throughout the poem (verses 1139-1140). Roland, himself, makes many prayers throughout the work (verses 1854-1856; 2196-2197; 2233-2245; 2252-2258; 2269-2272). As for the Cid, he seems to be a far more religious person than Roland, praying before and after all major actions. His religious aspect is also manifested in the presence of Archbishop Jerónimo, who had been selected by the Cid himself. As for Imam Husayn, he was the head of the Shi'ite faith, and the very embodiment of Islam. Neither the Cid nor Roland can compare to the religiousness of Imam Husayn who used to pray entire nights. Of particular interest are the promises of Paradise made in the *Song of Roland* and the *Rawdah Khani* to those who die in battle. In his sermon prior to battle, archbishop Turpin declared, "So, though you die, blest martyrs shall you live, / Thrones you shall win in the great Paradis" (verses 1134-1135). Imam Husayn made a similar declaration to his Shi'ites, saying, "Death is nothing but a bridge which you must cross after facing trials and tribulations so as to reach Heaven and its joys. Which of you would not prefer to leave this worldly prison and go to the lofty palaces of Paradise?" (Lalljee 108).

Religion plays a very important role in the Spanish, French, and Arabic epics, since each group wishes to justify its actions by showing that God is on their side. In the *Song of Roland*, the religious aspect is manifested in the dreams of Charlemagne, the fact that God stops the sun to permit the Franks to massacre the Muslims (verses 2458-2559), and the fact that the Angel Gabriel communicates directly with him (verses 3994-3998). In the *Poem of the Cid*, we find this divine favor in the dream of Ruy Díaz in which the Angel Gabriel communicated directly with him (verses 213-225). As regards Imam Husayn, he benefited from perpetual divine communication and use to communicate with the angels. We should also mention that the Angel Gabriel plays a major role in the

Islamic religion. As opposed to Roland and the Cid, who are not monks, priests, bishops or popes, Husayn was the Imam of Shi'ite Islam, the Successor of the Prophet, and the living highest authority of the Islamic faith.

Each of the three protagonists, Roland, the Cid, and Imam Husayn, has a clear identity. In the case of Roland, his identity is more nationalistic than religious. As Menéndez Pidal has demonstrated, the *Song of Roland* does not manifest the spirit of the Crusades (Moignet 101). It is more a nationalistic and expansionist work (17). The war cry of the Franks is "Mon joie" (verses 1182, 1234, 1260, 1350, 1378, 2151, etc.) which is nationalistic as opposed to religious. The references to religion are secondary. Roland fights for his honor, for Charlemagne, for his sweet France, and only after for religion. In reality, Roland is the manifestation of French imperialistic ambitions. If Roland has a French identity, then the Cid has a Spanish identity. He wishes to see a united Christian Spain. He identifies with Spain and with the Re-Conquest. He fights for his honor, rather than for his religion. The case of Imam Husayn is different in many regards. Imam Husayn fought for God, Islam, the truth, and the oppressed (al-Towhid 144-145). His struggle was devoid of materialistic motivation. As such, Imam Husayn was a religious martyr in contrast to the Cid and Roland who were national heroes.

Roland, the Cid, and Imam Husayn fought against individuals they considered to be "infidels." It is worthwhile to examine the vision of their enemies and their behavior towards them. The enemies of Roland were the Muslims whom the Franks called Saracens and "pagans," a pejorative label which is repeated a shocking amount of times (verses 24, 994, 1015, 1049, 1057, 1166, 1187, 1221, 1265, 1348, 1397, 1439, 1582, 1911, 1940, 2115, 2131, 2142, 2146, 2161, 2164, etc.). According to the *Song of Roland*, even the Muslims call themselves "pagans" (verses 1543, 1578). In the eyes of the Franks, the Muslims are polytheists. The religion they follow sounds more like Greco-Roman paganism than Islam, a radically monotheistic religion. According to the *Song of Roland*, Muslims do not love God. They serve Mahomet and invoke Apollin (verses 7-8). They follow a book which contains the law of Mahomet and Tervagant (verses 610-611). The Muslims have strange names such as Corsablix (verse 1235), Chernuble (verse 1325), Malsaron (verse 1353), Turgis and Esturgos (verse 1358), Justin de Val Feree (verse 1370), Timozel (verse 1382), Siglorel (verse 1390), Marsile (verses 610, 1449), Abisme (verse 1470), Climborins (verse 1528), Alphaïen (verse 1554), Escababi (verse 155), Valdabrun (verse 1562), Grandonie (verse 1636), Faldrun de Pui (verse 1871), Jurafleu le Blond (verse 1964), Marganice (verse 1914), Garmalie (verse 1915), and so

forth. While some of these names can be traced back etymologically to the Orient, none of them are Muslim names. In fact, many of them are French. These names strike use by their “bizarre nature” (12). In reality, many of them are not real names, but rather “sardonic nicknames” (12). There is clear effort on the part of the author of the *Song of Roland* to present Muslims in a diabolical light. The description of Abisme, the Saracen, clearly demonstrates this,

More felon none was in that company;
Cankered with guile and every felony,
He fears not God, the Son of Saint Mary;
Black is that man as molten pitch that seethes;
Better he loves murder and treachery
Than to have all the gold of Galicie;
Never has man beheld him sport for glee (verses 1632-1638)

The racism contained in verse 1474 is especially striking. There are several other racist references in the work. Ethiopia, which, in the European context of the Middle Ages, applied to black Africa, is described as a “cursed land” (verse 1916) inhabited by the black race, a “cursed race” (verse 1933). According to the *Song of Roland*, black men are “Broad in the nose they are and flat in the ear” (verse 1918). They are “more black than ink is on the pen / With no part white, only their teeth except” (verse 1933-1934). The hatred of the French is not only racial, it is also religious. Their philosophy is summarized in the following terms: “Pagans are wrong: Christians are right” (verse 1015). Faced with such “infidels,” the French have no other choice but to ravage their land, seize their castles, lay siege to their cities (verse 703-705), take as much booty as possible (verse 1167), and kill as many Muslims as possible, with the exception of those who convert to Christianity (33). In the *Poem of the Cid*, the Muslims are called *moros*, a pejorative term equivalent to the American “niggers.” Rather than invoke *Allah*, the Muslims in the Spanish epic invoke *Mahoma* or Muhammad (verse 730). It would appear that the authors of the *Song of Roland* and the *Poem of the Cid* were completely ignorant regarding the Islamic faith and had never been in the presence of Muslims. It is common knowledge that the Muslim war cry is *Allahu Akbar* or “God is the Greatest.” It is also quite possible that the image of Muslims as “polytheists” and “infidels” was not the simple product of ignorance, but part and parcel of anti-Islamic propaganda. Besides such ridiculous elements, the *Poem of the Cid* expresses much less prejudice than the *Song of Roland*. This may be explained by the fact that the Spanish Christians had more contact

with Muslims than the French did. Nonetheless, the behavior of the Cid and Roland towards Muslims was the same: they must be massacred or condemned to slavery. Although the *Poem of the Cid* does not provide great details regarding the massacre of Muslims, the following historical citation exemplifies the actions of the historical Cid,

He pursued them until Atienza, Sigüenza, Hita, and Guadalajara, all the way to Toledo, murdering, robbing, burning, destroying, and taking any captives he could, until nothing remained. Without counting the dead, he brought back eleven thousand captives, both men and women. (Marín 0.2)

The enemies of Imam Husayn were also infidels, hypocrites, and apostates, responsible for having committed terrible injustices and repugnant atrocities. Nonetheless, Imam Husayn was generous towards his enemies and encouraged them to repent and atone. He even saved the life of a battalion of Yazid's army which found itself without water in the middle of the desert (Zakir 17). As a result of his nobility of character, many enemy soldiers joined the ranks of Imam Husayn (18-22). Furthermore, Imam Husayn had prohibited his Shi'ites from cursing their enemies, something which differs greatly from the behavior of Roland (verse 1968). The struggle of Imam Husayn was not imperialistic like that of Roland nor was it one of Re-Conquest like that of the Cid. Imam Husayn never committed any injustice or atrocity. He always remained faithful to Islam's theory of "just war." He never lowered himself to the level of his enemies who used to rape women, kill children, and mutilate cadavers (al-Tawhid 112-140; Zakir chapters 9-11). It is here that we find a radical difference between the *Rawdah Khani* and the two European epics. The *Rawdah Khani* does not exalt violence. On the contrary, the protagonist, who is in a position of weakness, is the victim of violence. The protagonists in the *Song of Roland* and the *Poem of the Cid* are responsible for veritable acts of genocide.

The author of the *Song of Roland* glorifies violence (verse 1326-1336) as well as the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Muslims (verses 1438-1440). He seems to rejoice in the suffering which the French inflict (verses 1664-1666). He glorifies the amputation of limbs (verses 1653-1690), as well as the mutilation of Muslims (1646, 1956, 1871). The same phenomenon is found in the *Poem of the Cid* (verses 744-751, 2403-2406). The moral of the *Rawdah Khani* stresses the importance of struggling against oppression as opposed to the *Poem of the Cid* and the *Song of Roland* which encourage and glorify wars of aggression and ethnic "cleansing." The implications of these three epic poems have been profound throughout history and continue to influence

cultures and countries to this day. Inspired by the *Rawdah Khani*, the Shi'ites have developed a type of martyr complex. They are always ready to fight against tyrants and always side with the oppressed. This martyr complex manifested itself dramatically during the Islamic Revolution of Iran in which the lessons from the *Rawdah Khani* were put into practice. We also see that the lessons of the *Poem of the Cid* and the *Song of Roland* have been put into practice by the French and the Spaniards. The spirit of the *Poem of the Cid* and the *Chanson de Roland* inspired the French and the Spaniards to conquer and colonize a large part of the world, engaging in veritable genocides. The impact that these three epics have had on their respective peoples cannot be doubted. The only question that remains regards their historical validity.

Origin and Historical Validity

The origin of the *Rawdah Khani* dates back to the event of Karbala and Imam Husayn in the year 680 CE. The person responsible for its origin is Zaynab, the sister of Imam Husayn, who was one of the witnesses to the terrible tragedy. Shortly after she was freed, she started to organize *majalis* or religious gatherings in order to commemorate and lament the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. This religious manifestation was a combination of sermons, poems, Qur'anic verses, and drama, relating to the tragedy of Karbala. The *Rawdah Khani* was written down immediately after the events and has been passed down from generation to generation until our time. The *Rawdah Khani* is not limited to a single text. Like the Yugoslavian and French *chansons de geste* or "songs of heroic deeds," it consists of numerous collections of different versions. The *Rawdah Khani* is not limited to the lamentations of Zaynab as the nine Imams who followed Husayn enriched it with their sermons and wisdom. Furthermore, the greatest poets throughout the centuries have composed poems about the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. The *Rawdah Khani* is thus a combination of ancient and more modern elements, containing a fascinating literary richness. The work has even overcome linguistic barriers. The *Rawdah Khani* exists in a highly sophisticated form in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. Some experts consider the *Rawdah Khani* to be the most successful, and long-lasting, literary and dramatic work of all times (Jaffar 9). It is very much a living literary work and the enduring expression of religious and cultural community.

As regards the *Poem of the Cid*, and the *Song of Roland*, their historical validity is much lesser, something which can be seen by the numerous fictitious events and characters they contain. According to Francisco Marcos Marín, the Spanish epic seems far more primitive than the French epic despite the fact that it is more historical and

realistic. Marin, though, does not believe that Arabic works had a direct thematic influence on European works, despite the fact that he has demonstrated the existence of numerous Arab elements in the *Poem of the Cid*, and a few in the *Song of Roland*. Evidently, we do not entirely agree with him. We must, first and foremost, understand the medieval European attitude towards literature. Medieval literary works were not original creations. The greatness of a literary work was not in its conception but in its imitation of a classic work. We must not forget that that even the Greek and Latin classics were re-introduced into Europe through their Arabic translations. It is not unreasonable to believe that a classic like the *Rawdah Khani*, or a work inspired by it, could have exerted a considerable influence on the creation of the Spanish and French epics. This is only a possibility, of course. We must recall that human beings have similar psychological dispositions and that their imagination functions in a similar fashion.

Conclusion

As we have demonstrated, there are many similarities between the *Song of Roland*, the *Poem of the Cid*, and the *Rawdah Khani*. These similarities are found in the structure of these works, the events they describe, as well as their protagonists. Considering that it is the oldest of the three works, it seems that the *Rawdah Khani* may have influenced the Spanish and French epic poems directly or indirectly. This study does not pretend to present the “last word” regarding the thematic influence of Islamic literature on European literature. Our sole purpose is to point out certain interesting elements in the hopes that it will encourage deeper studies on the subject by future scholars.

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Chapter 26

The Arabic-Islamic Influence on the *Poem of the Cid*¹²⁹

Introduction

The origin of the Spanish epic is of great interest to many scholars. According to some researchers, the spread of epic poetry in Spain results from Latin influences. For others, it derives from French or German origin. Finally, there are those who believe it to be of Arabic provenance. As interesting as it may be, we are not interested in addressing issues of origin in this study. Rather, we prefer to speak of influences, focusing particularly on the Arabic impact on the Spanish epic. In the following pages, we will present the evidence in support of the Arabic influence on the *Poem of the Cid*, examining possible sources from Arabic literature, and without ignoring the delicate, but fundamentally important, issues of spread. As a result of a careful study, we will demonstrate that the *Poem of the Cid* contains thematic, stylistic, and structural elements of Arabic origin. We will also provide evidence suggesting that this Arabic influence entered Spanish literature, both directly from the Arabs, and indirectly from the Mozarabs and the French.

The Arabic Influence on the Spanish Epic

Julián Ribera was the first Arabist to argue for an Arabic origin to the *Poem of the Cid*. He defended the theory of the Arabic origin of the Spanish epic in his speech at the Spanish Academy of History in 1915. For Ribera, the existence of Arabic epic poetry suggested an Arabic origin for the *Poem of the Cid* (Marcos Marín, 1985: 19). He also believed that the Christians who lived in Muslim territory had composed popular Arabic-Andalusian epics which were later lost (Torrico 38). The problem with this last claim was the absence of epic Mozarabic texts to support it. Despite the importance of Ribera's work, few Hispanists took his theory seriously. What he did, however, was establish the foundations of a path that other scholars would follow. Such was the case with Egyptian professor, Lutfi Abd el-Badi.

In his doctoral dissertation titled *La poesía épica en la España musulmana*, Lutfi Abd el-Badi provides an overview of the epic traditions from al-Andalus. He explains

¹²⁹ The original version of this work, titled "La influencia árabe en el *Poema de mio Cid*," was published on October 11th, 2002, in *Alharaca*, the peer-reviewed journal of the Association of Students and Scholars of the Arab World from the University of Madrid's Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies. A greatly expanded version of the original work is published here for the first time in English translation.

that Arabic warrior chants, legends, *siyar* [biographies], *ahadith* [traditions], and *arjuza* [verse poems] formed a substratum during the formation of the Spanish epic. Importantly, he observes that Castile formed part of the “Islamic region” during the early days of the Re-Conquest (Marcos Marín, 1970: 58). Since the three major world religions coexisted in Castile, the Spaniards were exposed to Arabic-Islamic cultural influences. They were also subject to the enormous influx of Arabic culture caused by the expansion of the Mozarabs into León in the 10th century (Marcos Marín, 1970: 58). As a result of contact with Muslims and Mozarabs, epic legends and traditions of Arabic origin spread throughout Castile. The importance of Muslim bards, which Menéndez Pidal describes as great, would have facilitated this task (58). In his study, Abd el-Badi pointed out the Arabic traits found in five Spanish epics which, obviously, include the *Poem of the Cid*. As Marcos Marín describes it, Abd el-Badi’s contribution was more than a step forward, it represents a major advance and an essential springboard for any new advance in the field” (59). It was not until Francisco Marcos Marín came to its rescue, however, that Hispanists started to take the Arabic theory seriously.

Francisco Marcos Marín established, for the first time, essential methodological approaches for a more complex study of the Arabic influence on the Spanish epic in his *Memoria de licenciatura: estudios épicos*. In this study, he demonstrated that, during the first centuries, “the center of cultural dissemination was al-Andalus and the Christian kingdoms limited themselves to absorbing such influences” (Marcos Marín, 1971: 9). Not only did he demonstrate the existence of the epic in Arabic literature, he demonstrated its popularity among the rulers of al-Andalus (Marcos Marín, 1970: 71). The evidence advanced by Marcos Marín provided a fatal blow to opponents of the Arabic origin of the Poem of the Cid in general, and Samuel Miklos Stern, in particular, who had denied the existence of Arabic epic poetry in a study he published in 1964 (Stern, 1974: 205). Finally, Marcos Marín concluded that the arguments presented by Ribera and Abd el-Badi should be cast aside due to the absence of epic Mozarabic texts (Marcos Marín, 1971: 9). He emphasized that scholars needed to focus on existing evidence which is shared by both the Arabic and Spanish epics, including: the use of epithets and formulaic phrases like “llorar de los ojos” and “su mano la diestra”; the qualities of the hero like chivalry, courage, magnanimity, cunning, love, and strength; literary situations such as blood, family vengeance, separation, and submission to the king or to central authority; institutions like chivalry, centralism, the family, juridical duels, government, general assemblies of notables, the power of the king, and the power of the assembly (Marcos

Marín, 1971: 153-54). With these new notions, Marcos Marín founded what he called, “the new theory of the Arabic origin of the Hispanic and...European epic” (153).

In 1971, Francisco Marcos Marín published *Poesía narrativa árabe y épica hispánica* which was based on his doctoral dissertation. Far more detailed than the previous work, it commences with a study of literary theory in order to establish a clear and precise theoretical basis. The study then examines the various types of Arabic epics, including the *Ayyam al-‘Arab*, the *Hamasa* and the *Sira*, all of which trace back to pre-Islamic times and, with the exception of the *Ayyam*, continued to develop in Islamic times (Marcos Marín, 1971: 60). The *Ayyam al-‘Arab* consist of “prose narrations which describe the battles between Arab tribes up until the early days of Islam” (Marcos Marín, 1971: 63-64). *Hamasa* stands for an “anthology of descriptive narrative poetry” (68) which also conveys the sense of “epic” (72). This second meaning was later substituted by the word *mathama* which designates “narrations of heroic adventures from the pre-Islamic period which are combined with fantastic elements” (72). Since it was not versified, the *siyar* or biographies allowed authors great freedom to develop concepts than was possible in the *Ayyam* and the *Hamasa* (92). With this base, Marcos Marín examines the Arabic elements which are found in the Spanish epic. As Marcos Marín pointed out in his critical edition of the *Poem of the Cid*, the Spanish epic shares many literary motifs with the Arabic epic, including: descriptions of battle, the trip as the common thread in such stories such as *Sirat ‘Antara*, speeches made before battles, and the boastfulness of the hero (Marcos Marín, 1985: 44-45). He then compares the *Cid* with *Antara* and mentions the traits he shared with Arab heroes (Marcos Marín, 1985: 46).

Álvaro Galmés de Fuentes made some important contributions to the field, particularly in his book titled *Épica árabe y épica castellana*. He starts by rejecting the opinion of Dozy, who affirmed that “The epic does not exist in Arabic literature; it does not even have narrative poetry” (Galmés de Fuentes 1978: 17). He clearly establishes that “Arab and Arabist critics do not deny the existence of epic-chivalrous narratives in Arabic literature” (19). In order to prove his point, he comments on the *Sirat ‘Antara*, the *Sira* genre, and its narrators. Those narrators, who were spread throughout the Muslim work, “composed and spread works on the lives of Muhammad and the heroes of Islam, including ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib” (31). The role of narrator, which played such an important role in the transmission of epic legends, “was also very common among the Arabs who settled in Spain” (35). In fact, “the popularity of narrating in Muslim Spain was increased by the stimulus of the Umayyad” (35). Epic legends were passed down from generation

to generation via the oral tradition. Interestingly, the first person to prepare a systematic redaction of the *Ayyam al-‘Arab* was a Hispano-Arab (Galmés de Fuentes, 1978: 36). According to Galmés de Fuentes, “the repercussion in Muslim Spain of the Arabic epic of Oriental theme, must have developed in al-Andalus, in imitation thereof, a narrative epic of Hispanic ASUNTO” (39). He also points out the relationship between the Sira literature and the literature of the Moriscos (44-45). The epic-narrative genre of the Arabs, born during the pre-Islamic period of *Jahiliyyah*, survived, first in al-Andalus, and then among the Moriscos until the 17th century when they were expelled from the Peninsula by Felipe III (45).

Galmés de Fuentes also examines the fundamental role that the narrators and bards played in the transmission of poetry, in general and epic poetry in particular (51). He explains that Muslim minstrelsy was very important in the royal courts of Christian Spain, “as well as the influential activity of professional Muslim and Christian minstrels as shown in the miniature of the codex of the canticles of Alfonso X, the Wise, which depicts a Muslim minstrel and a Christian minstrel playing lutes and singing as a duo” (Galmés de Fuentes, 1978: 51). According to the testimony of Ibn Bassam, we know that the historical Cid was especially fond of Arabic epic literature (51). Further ahead, he affirms that,

While the Cid was at the Valencian court, which brought together Christian and Muslim minstrels, and where Romance language bards (from Spain and France) learned Arabic epics from their Moorish Companions, he enjoyed listening to Arabic epics. There, in that very court may have lived the very minstrel who wrote the *Poem of the Cid*. (52)

Among the thematic elements from the Arabic epic which are reflected in the Spanish epic, Galmés de Fuentes includes the dignified nickname that the protagonists of epics are typically granted, the long hair, the accumulation of oaths, the personal names of weapons, the episode with the two Jews in Burgos, the cunning of war, the theme of the “traitor,” the bad omens, the magical value of the word, self-invocation, and the duel between champions. He also includes the presence of women in war, the woman of high class subjected to captivity, falling in love, holy war, the souls of the enemies being cast into Hell, the joy when faced with one’s enemy, theft and the distribution of booty, the appearance of the Angel Gabriel, the divination by means of birds, crying over the amputated heads, and the concept of glad tidings. Other Arabic elements include the rectilinear narration, direct dialogue, the bard and his introduction to the public in the

narration, and meter. According to Galmés de Fuentes “rhymed Arabic prose coincides...in its fundamental characteristics, with the poetic structure of the most ancient Spanish epic for which reason we can establish, without doubt, a new relationship, born from an Islamic contribution (1978: 149). The internal organization of the Arabic epic is reflected in the Spanish epic in its realism, historicity, tolerance, balance, and a democratic ideal.

In a previous study titled “Étude comparée de *la Chanson de Roland*, le *Poema de mio Cid* et le *Rawdah Khani*” we demonstrated in detail the notable similarities between the French and Spanish epics and the *Rawdah Khani* or *Elegies of the Garden* (of the Martyrs). In this aforementioned essay, we studied the similarities in structure, plot and characters. We also examined the historical accuracy of the epics in question as well as their origin. We concluded that, “since the *Rawdah Khani* is older than the two other works, it may have influenced the Spanish and French epics directly or indirectly” (Morrow 39). Having established the literary influence on the basis of our detailed comparisons of the three epics, the sole thing that remained was to demonstrate the possibility that the *Rawdah Khani* could have influenced the *Poem of the Cid* and the *Song of Roland* on the basis of historical and literary evidence. It is obvious that, in order to demonstrate the existence of the *Rawdah Khani* in al-Andalus, we need to establish that there was a Shi’ite presence and influence in Islamic Spain. Evidently, wherever Shi’ite are present, so are the passion plays in honor of Imam Husayn. Before entering into this unexplored territory, it would be worthwhile to provide a brief contextualization of the *Rawdah Khani*.

El *Rawdah Khani*

The *Rawdah Khani* or passion play in honor of Imam Husayn consists of a combination of sermons, poems, Qur’anic verses, and drama, which describe the martyrdom of the grandson of the Prophet which took place on the day of ‘Ashura, the tenth day of the month of Muharram, in the plain of Karbala, Iraq, in the year 680 C.E. The *Rawdah Khani* or elegies form an intrinsic part of the mourning ceremonies of ‘Ashura which are known by the name of *Ta’ziyah*.

The ceremonies are public expressions of grief and sorrow and consist of: recital of elegies, beating of head and face, the bringing out of mourning processions in the streets and markets, weeping in mourning assemblies; and parading of biers, models of the mausoleum, riderless horses; suggesting scenes of the incidents. (Jaffer)

The person responsible for the *Rawdah Khani* is Zaynab bint ‘Ali, the sister of Imam Husayn, who witnessed the terrible tragedy. As soon as she was liberated from the prisons of Yazid, she started to organized religious mourning ceremonies or *majalis* in order to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Husayn.

Out of fear of persecution, many Shi‘ites over the centuries have been forced to remember the death of Imam Husayn in private gatherings. The earliest recorded public ceremonies of ‘*Ashura* took place in Baghdad in the year 963 C.E. and were organized upon the orders of the Sultan Mu‘izz al-Dawla (Baktash 96). There are also records of public mourning for Husayn in Egypt under the reign of Mu‘izz Lidinillah (970 d.C.) in which “[p]oets recited elegies which they had written in commemoration of the oppression and martyrdom of Husayn amidst the wailing and keening and chanting of the crowd” (98). Clearly, the *Rawdah Khani* and the *Ta’ziyah* spread throughout the Islamic empire, reaching the peak of their popularity under the Safavids. Although the *Rawdah Khani* does not exist in identical form in Sunni Islam, other forms of elegies (*marathi*) and dramas about the tragedy of Karbala can be observed from southeast Asia all the way to Morocco.

The *Rawdah Khani* was written down immediately after the events and has been passed down from generation to generation until our time. The *Rawdah Khani* is not limited to a single text. Like the Yugoslavian and French *chansons de geste* or “songs of heroic deeds,” it consists of numerous collections of different versions. The *Rawdah Khani* is not limited to the lamentations of Zaynab as the nine Imams who followed Husayn enriched it with their sermons and wisdom. Furthermore, the greatest poets throughout the centuries have composed poems about the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. The *Rawdah Khani* is thus a combination of ancient and more modern elements, containing a fascinating literary richness. The work has even overcome linguistic barriers. The *Rawdah Khani* exists in a highly sophisticated form in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. Some experts consider the *Rawdah Khani* to be the most successful, and long-lasting, literary and dramatic work of all times (Jaffar 9). As Sir Lewis Pelly wrote regarding the success of the *Rawdah Khani*,

If the success of a drama is to be measured by the effects which it produces upon the people for whom it is composed, or upon the audience before whom it is represented, no play has even surpassed the tragedy known in the Muslim world as that of Hasan and Husayn (III).

The Shi‘ite Presence and Influence in al-Andalus

Hasan Hotait Al-Amili was the first historian to complete a critical study on the history of Shi'ism in al-Andalus without succumbing to prejudice and without being deceived by falsified facts and propaganda regarding Shi'ite leaders and movements. In his study, he presents the history of the Shi'ite presence and influence in the Iberian Peninsula, providing a list of Shi'ite military movements, writers, academics, and religious leaders. However, in order to provide a more general picture of the Shi'ite situation in al-Andalus, we need to synthesize the information found in the works of Orientalists such as Saunders, Hitti y Mahmud.

In June of 710, Tarif, along with four hundred soldiers, all of whom were Berbers, scouted out the Iberian Peninsula in order to prepare for its Islamic invasion (Hitti 493). Shortly thereafter, Tariq ibn Ziyad, a former Berber slave, reached the Iberian Peninsula with 7,000 men, most of whom Berbers (493). Although the Berbers embraced Islam after they were conquered by the Arabs, they generally did not accept the Sunni version of their conquerors. Rather, they tended to embrace the Shi'ite version of Islam with its revolutionary ideology. As J.J. Saunders explains, "As a mark of independence and dislike of Arab racial pretensions, the Berbers tended to join dissident sects" (131). In fact, according to Shi'ite popular tradition, Tariq ibn Ziyad is believed to have been a Shi'ite who was practicing *taqiyyah*. This idea is reinforced by the fact that Tariq's boats were provided in part by Yemenite Muslims (Hitti 502). And, as Hitti has explained, "The Yemenites everywhere were inculcated with Shi'ite ideas" (502).

The Shi'ite Berbers of North Africa and al-Andalus rebelled on so many occasions against the Arabs that dominated them that they placed the very existence of Arab colonists in jeopardy (502). The Shi'ite threat increased greatly with the establishment of the Idrisids in Morocco and the Hamudis in al-Andalus, both of which were Twelver Shi'ites dynasties. For the Umayyad from al-Andalus, the most intimidating of all Shi'ites were the Fatimids. This Isma'ili Imamate was founded in Tunisia as a result of the Shi'ite propaganda preached by Abu 'Abd Allah al-Husayn al-Shi'i, a Yemenite who claimed to be a precursor to the Mahdi, the Fatimids incited the Berbers to rebel against Sunni Arab rule throughout the Maghreb and al-Andalus (Hitti 617).

Although the Umayyads of al-Andalus were relatively tolerant towards Jews and Muslims, they had zero tolerance for Kharijites and Shi'ites. As such, the Berber Shi'ites of al-Andalus suffered from the persecution of their Sunni Arab rulers. Caliph 'Umar II, who ruled in al-Andalus from 717-720, went to the extreme of introducing the ritualized

cursing of 'Ali in the Friday prayers (Mahmud 82). Arab racism can also be seen in the Andalusian poetry of the time which actually encouraged the genocide of the Berbers (Nykl 72-73) as well as the concrete policies established by the Umayyads in order to achieve this final solution (Hitti 502). Sunni Arab religious intolerance resulted in the creation of an Islamic Inquisition, the purpose of which was to persecute all Muslims who did not follow the Maliki school of jurisprudence. It was only as a result of *taqiyyah* that Shi'ites survived in Islamic Spain.

As we have seen, historical evidence confirms the existence of Shi'ite communities in al-Andalus. The same can be said regarding literary evidence. Works like *The Epic of the Descendants of 'Ali* by Ibn al-Abbar, an Andalusian Shi'ite from the 13th century, represents an eloquent example of the existence of the *Rawdah Khani* in Islamic Spain. Evidence for the existence of Shi'ites in Spain, and the spread of the Shi'ite passion play in honor of Imam Husayn, is especially evident in the *aljamiado* literature produced by the Moriscos.

The Shi'ite Influence on Aljamiado Literature

The existence of strong Shi'ite communities in al-Andalus can be clearly sensed from an informed reading of Aljamiado-Morisco literature. The prophetic traditions regarding the virtues of Ahl al-Bayt [the Household of the Prophet] are rather rare in Sunni compilations. Shi'ite works, however, contain an abundance of traditions on the subject. If there were Shi'ites in Spain, they would surely have left literary evidence of their ideology, something we see clearly in Aljamiado literature.

In *Aljamiadotexte* we find traditions which demonstrate the superiority of 'Ali over Abu Bakr and the other Companions of the Prophet (Kontzi: f 154), traditions regarding the angelic protection received by Fatimah, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah (f 155), as well as traditions regarding the martyrdom of 'Ali (f 156). The work also includes a famous prophetic tradition which is often cited by Shi'ites in which the Prophet affirms that he who is at war with Husayn is at war with 'Ali; he who is at war with 'Ali is at war with Muhammad; he who is at war with Muhammad is at war with Gabriel; and he who is at war with Gabriel is at war with Allah (f. 157). In this particular prophetic tradition, Abu Bakr demonstrates his inferiority compared to the Family of the Prophet.

Other Aljamiado documents of clearly Shi'ite origin include *El-alhadiz del alkazar del-oro, i la estoria de la kuluebra kon 'Ali ibnu abi Talib*, found in the manuscript of the Biblioteca del Palacio Real de Madrid, as well as the *Leyenda de 'Alí y*

las cuarenta doncellas, contained in the ancient manuscript collection of Gayangos. The miscellaneous manuscript 774 from the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris contains a prayer from Fatimah (Sánchez Álvarez 153). Other eloquent examples of Morisco Shi'ism include "El hadiz de Sarjil ibnu Sarjun" included in *Cinco leyendas y otros relatos moriscos* by Ottmar Hegyi, as well as the *Libro de las batallas*, edited by Galmés de Fuentes. The former contains clear references to Shi'ite beliefs regarding the superiority of 'Ali when compared to the other Companions of the Prophet, the divine knowledge of the Imam, his ability to understand animal language, and his ability to predict the future. The *Libro de las batallas*, which deals with the early Islamic battles, features 'Ali, as opposed to the Prophet, as the protagonist. As Galmés de Fuentes confirmed, "All of these traditions...belong to the 'Alid tradition, so arduously defended by the Shi'ite party for whom 'Ali was the greatest hero of Islam" (1975: 16). On the basis of both historical and literary evidence, it is clearly confirmed that Shi'ite communities existed in al-Andalus, that they cultivated the *Rawdah Khani*, and that they made a remarkable effort to preserve, protect, and spread their Shi'ite teachings after the Re-Conquest.

Modes of Influence

The influence of Arabic literature on medieval Spanish literature seems to have been both direct and indirect. As Abd el-Badi has demonstrated, Castile was within the "Islamic area" during the primitive period of the Re-Conquest (Marcos Marín, 1970: 58). Furthermore, the level of Arabic-Spanish bilingualism was very elevated throughout Spain. As G.T. Beech has explained, "Pedro (I de Aragón) customarily signed his charters in Arabic and was almost certainly bilingual" (31). He also suggests that the Cid spoke Arabic (31; 35-36 nota 55). In her study on "Arabic-Speaking Christians in al-Andalus," Hanna Klaus demonstrated that "in the mid-11th century, the Christians of al-Andalus seem to have been completely Arabized linguistically and Islamized culturally" (442). According to Hitti, the Arabization of Spain proceeded from Córdoba, from where "Arabicized Christians, Mozarabs, quite conversant with Arabic literature, had communicated many elements of Arabic culture to the other kingdoms of the north and south" (559). As we have explained before, the court of Alfonso X, the Wise, included Moorish bards (Galmés de Fuentes, 1978: 51). As Beech has observed, 11th century al-Andalus had a population of seven million inhabitants, the majority of whom were descendants of Iberians, Romans, and Goths (Beech 30). Although their mother tongue was Romance and they were not Arabs by birth, they used to speak Arabic (30). According to Beech, the majority of Spaniards had converted to Islam during the early

days of the Muslim rule, had learned the Arabic language, and had adopted the Arabic way of life (30). The Mozarabs, on the other hand, preserved the Christian religion in matters of faith, but adopted the Arabic language and culture. As Beech explains,

Thus both elements of the indigenous pre-invasion population were largely bilingual, speaking both Romance and the colloquial Arabic which came to co-exist with the classical Arabic of the Koran. Bilingualism was particularly common in the unclearly defined frontier areas like the kingdoms of Zaragoza and Aragon where Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived interspersed even though owing allegiance to different, often hostile rulers. In this kind of setting no strict, rigid boundaries separated either nationalities or languages but people passed from one to the other... Thus for a native Spaniard of around 1100, whether Muslim, Christian, or Jew, knowledge of Arabic was perfectly normal, not something erudite, obscure, or acquired only with great difficulty and long study. (30-31)

As such, the Arabic influence on the Spanish epic may have been the direct result of Muslim-Christian contact. It may also have come through the Mozarabs who acted essentially as cultural intermediaries. The Arabic influence on the Spanish epic must surely have come directly from al-Andalus. Nonetheless, it is possible that some of the Arabic elements in the *Poem of the Cid* reached it via Islamic elements circulating in France. In fact, many scholars have pointed out the influence of the *Song of Roland* on the *Poem of the Cid*. According to Menéndez Pidal, these similarities include the repetition of the indefinite “tanto,” the type of descriptions (39), the use of prayers (40-41), and the stress placed on the tears of the protagonists (42). According to Menéndez Pidal, the French influence on the *Poem of the Cid* was due to Road to Santiago which brought numerous French pilgrims to Spain, many of whom entertained themselves through the recitation of the *Song of Roland* (46). Interestingly, the *Song of Roland* contains aspects which are undoubtedly of Arabic origin. The names of the swords, for example, are of Arabic origin (Galmés de Fuente, 1978: 65-66). Furthermore, many of the elements which were previously considered to be of Germanic origin have been found to be of Arabic origin. How, then, did the Arabic influence reach France?

The Arabic Influence on French Medieval Literature

The first potential source of Arabic influence on Medieval French literature can be traced back to the Arabic and Berber presence in the south and southwest of France from the year 717 to 752. After 752, the Arabic and Berber presence persisted more

sporadically for another twenty years. Although half a century is not a long span of time, it is possible that the French may have been subject to Arabic influence during this period of time, despite the difficulty of demonstrating it with concrete evidence.

The Arabic and Berber influence on France, however, seems to have been much stronger than previously believed. As DNA studies confirm, Arab and Berber genes range from 2 to 11% in French people and is particularly elevated in the Basque region of Spain and France. While it may seem strange to some that the majority of Berber genes in Spain are found in the northern extremes of what was once al-Andalus, it must be recalled that the Arabs seized all the best lands for themselves, leaving the Berbers to settle in the less fertile mountainous regions which reminded them of their mountainous homelands in North Africa.

If one wishes to look for evidence of Arabic influence on French medieval literature the most logical place to look is the poetry of the troubadours. For many years now, Orientalists have confirmed the Arabic influence on troubadour poetry. The theory of the Arabic influence on troubadour poetry never convinced Romance scholars despite the fact they approached the subject solely from Romance sources, and had no mastery whatsoever of Arabic material (Beech 15). According to Nykl, “What is now called Old Provençal poetry was formed in its beginning, about 1100 A.D., from elements which were partly autochthonous and partly imitated from the poetic activity in the neighboring Christian-Muslim world” (373). Nykl holds that Guillaume IX imitated the rhythms of Arabic-Islamic poetry which he may have learned from his young wife from Aragón in Spain (373-74). In fact, he points precisely to the Arabic *zajal*, poems which commenced with amorous compliments known as *tajazzul*. As Nykl explains, “[i]n the *tajazzul* we find the amatory commonplaces, also used in the Classical Arabic poetry of the same period, and which appear in Old Provençal poetry with a fidelity that points rather to an imitation than to an independent invention” (271).

Nykl enumerates eight similarities between the poetry of al-Andalus and the poetry of the troubadours, including: rhyme scheme, number of stanzas, the use of the refrain, typical characters, fictitious names, themes, the use of the confidant, the absolute devotion of the lover to his lady, and the spring-time setting (271-72). He points out the similarities between the *Diwan* of Ibn Quzman and the poetry of Guillaume IX (299). In the *Diwan*, we find Spanish words, as well as two complete sentences in Spanish which are almost identical to some Galician songs (Nykl 299-300). The external evidence demonstrates that the *azjal* of Ibn Quzman were aimed, not at the masses, but rather to

gatherings of highly cultured intellectuals (300). This was the very same audience to which the troubadours directed their poetry.

The “Elegía árabe de Valencia,” included in the text of the *Primera crónica de España*, prepared by Alfonso X, the Wise, and the *Crónica del Cid* also provide evidence of Arabic influence (303). The work is attributed to the jurist, al-Waqqasi, who recited it to the inhabitants of Valencia in January of 1094 while the city was under siege by the Cid (Nykl 303). The influence of this work on the *Poem of the Cid* is unquestionable. As Nykl explains, if we compare the poetic forms of Guillaume, Marcabru and Rudel, with the poetic forms that prevailed in Islamic Spain, “we cannot fail to find considerable analogies which can only be explained by imitation or adaptation, not by independent invention” (379). He also affirms that nothing prevented the Franks from obtaining ample information regarding Arabic poetry and its rhythms through Arabic-French interpreters who were both accessible and available to those who were interested in literary matters (381). Furthermore, we have the testimony of Petrus Alphonsi dating to approximately 1106 confirming that translations of Arabic poetry and prose works both existed, and were available to literate persons. (381). As Beech has pointed out, the structure of Guillaume’s poems which date from after his participation in the Crusades, show a great deal of affinity with the *muwassahat* and the *azjal* (as had been noted by Ribera) and that the rhythm of such songs continues to be recited today in places like Tunis (383). He also mentions the Andalusian influence on the poetry of Marcabru (385). The Arabic influence on troubadour poetry can also be seen in the titles of their works. As Hitti has observed, many of the titles of their poems were mere Arabic translations (Hitti 600). It should also not be forgotten that the monastery of Cluny in France was a major center for the spread of Arabic culture in the 12th century. In fact, it was in the Cluny that the first Latin translation of the Qur’an was conducted (589). In 1276, not far away from France, in the Spanish city of Miramar, Ramón Llull founded a religious seminary dedicated to the study of the Arabic language (663).

The claims made by Stern that the troubadours were not subject to any Arabic influence whatsoever (220-21) can be categorically rejected on the basis of recent studies. In his study titled “Troubadour Contacts with Muslim Spain and Knowledge of Arabic,” G.T. Beech demonstrated the possibility that the first troubadour, Guillaume IX of Aquitaine, had knowledge of Arabic through his contacts with Muslim Spain (15). He points out the similarities between a verse in his eleventh song, “Pos de cantar,” and a Sephardic psalmody (15). He also explains that some scholars have found an Arabic

verse in one of his poems which may have been inspired by an episode from the Qur'an (15-16). As Beech demonstrates, the troubadour's circle of family and friends included Arabic speakers. He was even a personal friend of the King of Zaragoza, Imad al-Dawla 'Abd al-Malik ibn Ahmad ibn Hud (who ruled from 1110-1130), the last representative of a dynasty that had presided over a court of distinguished Arab and Jewish scientists, philosophers, and poets between the 11th and 12th centuries (18, 34). Beech also explains that "Spanish Muslim culture had been penetrating into southwestern France, including Aquitaine and Poitou, in various forms since the middle of the XIth century...and signs of it would have been recognizable as such to any observant individual at the time" (23). He mentions that the Islamic influence entered France via French travelers, pilgrims, and knights, who were returning from the wars of Re-Conquest (23-24). He also speaks of the spread of Islamic science which had been entering France since the 10th century via the Ebro valley, a region which was settled by English, French, and German scholars who relocated there in search of knowledge (25). Beech believes that Islamic-French contacts were mostly indirect, and came via pilgrims and soldiers (27). Still, he recognizes the possibility of direct contacts, for example, by means of Muslim slaves brought back by the French (27, 41).

As can be appreciated, the Islamic influence on France was notable. Consequently, the possibility that some Arabic literary influences entered into medieval French literature cannot be denied. These Arabic influences may have entered into French literature during half a century of Muslim occupation. They may also have entered the language through the troubadours. These influences may then have re-entered Spain via the *Song of Roland* and reached the *Poem of the Cid*. Knowledge of the *Chanson de Roland* may have reached the Spaniards via the Road to Santiago. The existence of French neighborhoods in the cities of the northern Iberian Peninsula is a documented fact.

Conclusions

In the previous pages we have investigated the Arabic influence on the Spanish epic. We have examined the contributions made to the subject by Julián Ribera, Francisco Marcos Marín and Galmés de Fuentes, without failing to take our own into consideration. We have seen that the Arab epics, in general, and the *Rawdah Khani*, in particular, appear to have influence on the *Poem of the Cid* from a thematic, stylistic, and structural perspective. We have also proposed that this Arabic influence entered Spanish

literature directly and indirectly from al-Andalus, possibly by means of the Mozarabs, as well as through the spread of Arabic influences which came from France.

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Chapter 27

***Tawhid* in Theological Mode¹³⁰**

Despite their differences, all Muslim theologians, be they Sunni, Shi'i or Sufi, have listed *Tawhid* as the first pillar of Islam. Consequently, the theological mode of *Tawhid* is the one which is most familiar to the majority of Muslims. For most Muslims, however, *Tawhid* is the simple profession that "There is no god but Allah," which is the lowest level of faith. However, the theological mode of *Tawhid* is far deeper than most Muslims imagine.

The profession of faith, *La ilaha illa Allah* or "There is no god but Allah," is not a single statement. In actuality, it contains two clauses *La ilaha*, "There is no god," which is followed by *illa Allah* or "but Allah." The first part of the profession is the proclamation that there is no God. There is no God as "God" can be capitalized, it can be written in small caps, it can be made plural as in "gods" and it can be made feminine as in "goddesses." The first part of the proclamation of faith, then, is a negation of God. In other words, before one can believe, one must disbelieve, disbelieve in gods and goddesses, in all shapes in form, spiritual or material. The first part of the *Shahadah* is atheism, in the Western philosophical sense of the destruction of man-made deism that stands in opposition to the Divine.

The second part of the proclamation of faith, *illa Allah* or "but Allah," is an affirmation. Since the second clause is dependent on the first clause, one cannot reach the second unless one has accepted the first. In a spiritual sense, one cannot truly believe in Allah until one has detached oneself from all false deities. These imaginary gods are not only deified cultural heroes, both mythological and historical. These imaginary gods are not merely material wealth, women, and children. As far as Muslim mystics are concerned, anything other than Allah is a false god that must be rejected before one can truly accept the Oneness of Allah.

The belief that "There is no god but Allah," as important as it may be to Muslims, is not sufficient for salvation. If that were so, Iblis or Satan, who was once one of the closest of the Jinns to Allah, would be considered the Best of Believers since he refused to bow to anyone other than Allah. No. In order to be a Believer, one must submit to Allah, something which Satan refused to do out of arrogance and insolence. This

¹³⁰ This article was previously published as the preface to the English translation of the *Kitab al-Tawhid* by Shaykh Saduq. See: Saduq, Shaykh. *Kitab al-Tawhid / The Book of Divine Unity*. Trans. Sayyid 'Ali Rizvi. Ed. John Andrew Morrow, Barbara Castleton, and Sayyid 'Ali Rizvi. London and Qum: The Saviour Foundation, 2010.

obedience towards Allah is specified in the second section of the *Shahadah*, “Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.” In order for one to truly believe, one must believe in three things: 1) There is no God, 2) There is only Allah, and 3) Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. The first part of the *Shahadah*, *La ilaha illa Allah*, represents negative energy, while the second part of the *Shahadah*, *Muhammadan Rasul Allah*, represents positive energy, without which there would be no light of faith. The union of both is a symbol of *Tawhid*, of unity, of oneness, between Allah and His Messenger.

As part of their propaganda, the Salafis have attempted to minimize the spiritual might of Muhammad, insisting that he was mere man through whom Allah sent a message. They claim that it is *shirk* or polytheism to place the name of the Prophet next to the name of Allah “as if they were equal.” Some have even gone so far as to refuse to recite the salutations to the Prophet in their prayers and the blessings upon the Prophet and his Holy Household, both of which are obligatory according to every school of Islamic jurisprudence. As the Qur’an commands: “Allah and His Angels send blessings on the Prophet, O you who believe! Send your blessings on him, and salute him a thorough salutation” (33:56). The Qur’an is emphatic regarding the obligation to obey both Allah and His Messenger: “O you who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger and render not vain your deeds” (47:33) and “He who obeys the Messenger has indeed obeyed Allah” (4:80).

For Sunni Muslims, there are three, and sometimes four, types of *Tawhid*: *Tawhid al-Rububiyyah*, *Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah*, *Tawhid al-Asma’ wa al-Sifat*, and *Tawhid al-Hakimiyyah*. *Tawhid al-Rububiyyah* or the Unity of Lordship means that God is One, the Sole Source of Existence, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. *Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah*, also known as *Ibadah*, means that all acts of worship belong to Allah alone; and *Tawhid al-Asma wa al-Sifat* is an affirmation of the attributes of Allah as mentioned in the Qur’an and Sunnah and an assertion that Allah is without similitude. The final form of *Tawhid*, *Tawhid al-Hakimiyyah* or the Unity of Law is called into question by some Sunnis and some Salafis who claim that it is an innovation. In essence, it means that Allah is All-Law, the sole source of *Shari’ah* or legal legislation.

For Twelver Shi’ites, *Tawhid* is of three types: *Tawhid al-Dhat* or the Unity of the Essence, *Tawhid al-Sifat* or the Unity of Attributes, and *Tawhid al-Af’al* or the Unity of Action. The Names of the Essence refer to eternal attributes which are specific to Allah alone. The Names of Attributes refer to names whose opposites cannot be applied to God. For example, Alive, Knowing, Powerful, Hearing, and Seeing. The Names of

Action refers to names whose opposites can be applied to Allah: Merciful/Wrathful, Gentle/Severe, Beautiful/Majestic, Guider/Misguider, Forgiver/Avenger, Exalter/ Abaser, Beneficent/Harmer, Life Giver/Slayer, and Expander/Contractor. One can only become aware of the Unity of Essence if one becomes aware of the Unity of Attributes and the Unity of Action, both of which derive from the Essence from which everything emanates. The Unity of Attributes is manifested prior to creation while the Unity of Action is manifested after creation. *Allah* is the Name of the Essence clothed in all its Attributes. Individual Attributes of Allah, such as *al-Rabb*, represent merely one Aspect of the Essence.

In order to better understand Allah, the Twelver Shi'ite theologians have described the Divine by means of positive and negative attributes. Just like the first phrase of the profession of faith is composed of both a negative and a positive clause, Allah is represented by both negative and positive attributes. The positive attributes of Allah are known as *Sifat Subutiyyah* while the negative attributes of Allah are known as *Sifat Salbiyyah*. The positive attributes of Allah are eight in number and include:

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|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Qadim</i> : | Allah is Eternal. |
| 2. <i>Qadir</i> : | Allah is Omnipotent. |
| 3. <i>'Alim</i> : | Allah is Omniscient. |
| 4. <i>Hayy</i> : | Allah is Alive. |
| 5. <i>Murid</i> : | Allah is Independent in Action. |
| 6. <i>Mudrik</i> : | Allah is Aware. |
| 7. <i>Mutakallim</i> : | Allah Speaks. |
| 8. <i>Sadiq</i> : | Allah is Truth. |

The negative attributes of Allah are eight in number. They include:

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|----------------------------|--|
| 1. <i>Murakkab</i> : | Allah is not made of material. |
| 2. <i>Jism</i> : | Allah does not have a body. |
| 3. <i>Makan</i> : | Allah is not subject to place. |
| 4. <i>Muhtaj</i> : | Allah is not dependent. |
| 5. <i>Mar'i</i> : | Allah cannot be seen. |
| 6. <i>Mahal hawadith</i> : | Allah is not subject to change. |
| 7. <i>Sharik</i> : | Allah has no partners. |
| 8. <i>Hulul</i> : | Allah does not incarnate into anything or anybody. |

In the place of *Sharik*, some scholars list *Sifat Za'idah* which means that Allah does not have added qualities. In other words, the attributes of Allah are not separate from His Being.

Since it is impossible to understand the essence of Allah--since none knows God but God--the Almighty has revealed attributes through which we may get to know Him. Known as the Ninety-Nine Names or the Most Beautiful Names of Allah, these attributes have been divided into both masculine and feminine attributes by Muslim theologians. The terms “masculine” and “feminine” must not be understood in the sense of male or female as Allah does not have gender. While neither male nor female, Allah unites both the Sacred Masculine and the Sacred Feminine as part of His Perfect *Tawhid*. It is for this reason that Ibn al-‘Arabi says that Allah can be referred to as both *Huwa* (He) and *Hiya* (She). This is also possible because Allah is a genderless noun.

The Masculine Attributes of Allah, known as the Attributes of Might and Power or *Jalal*, include *al-Malik*, the King; *al-Muhaymin*, the Protector; *al-Jabbar*, the Compeller; *al-Mutakabbir*, the Majestic; *al-Qahhar*, the Subduer; *al-Hasib*, the Reckoner; *al-Qawiyy*, the Strong; *al-Muntaqim*, the Avenger, among many others. Even the Feminine Attributes of Allah are employed in their masculine form.

The Feminine Attributes of Allah, known as the Attributes of Beauty or *Jamal*, include *al-Hakim*, or the Wise, derived from *hikmah*, the Arabic word for wisdom, and the equivalent of the Greek *Sophia*. The attributes of *al-Rahman* and *al-Rahim* are also Feminine Attributes, and derive from *rahmah* as does *rahim*, the Arabic word for womb, matrix or uterus: *rahim*. Most remarkable of all, the word for the Divine Essence itself, *al-Dhat*, is equally feminine. This Divine Essence has been described by Sufi Master Najm al-Din Kubra as “the Mother of Divine Attributes.” Although most Muslims employ a masculine pronoun when invoking Allah, following a grammatical tradition in which the masculine takes precedence over the feminine, Ibn al-‘Arabi would sometimes employ the feminine pronoun in addressing Allah, keeping in view the Essence. Since Almighty Allah Himself says that “My Mercy prevails over my Wrath” (*Rahmati sabaqat ghadabi*) (Bukhari) the Greatest of Masters is justified in giving precedence to the feminine (*rahmah*) over the masculine (*ghadab*).

The Feminine and Masculine attributes of Allah exist in opposition to one another, much like the Taoist yin and yang. For example, Allah is the Avenger (*Muntaqim*), the Judge (*Hakam*), and the Just (‘*Adil*), but He is also the Gentle (*Halim*), the Oft-Forgiving (*Rahman*), and the Most Merciful (*Rahim*). He is the First (‘*Awwal*),

but He is also the Last (‘*Akhir*). He is the Creator (*Khaliq*), but He is also the Destroyer (*Mumit*). He is the Giver of Life (*Muhyi*) but He is also the Giver of Death (*Mumit*). He is the Light (*Nur*), but He is also the Hidden One (*Batin*). He is the Abaser (*Khafid*) but He is also Exalter (*Rafi*). He is the Provider (*Mu’ti*), but He is also the Withholder (*Mani*).

Although Islam does not allow Muslims to invoke God as Father or Mother--categorically rejecting the notion that human beings are the children of God--the Feminine and Masculine Attributes of Allah can also be conceived of in terms of the Eternal Paternal and the Eternal Maternal. In a tradition not found in traditional sources, Ibn al-‘Arabi cites the Prophet as saying: “The creatures are Allah’s family” (Ibn al-‘Arabi. *Futuhāt* IV 228.3).

On one occasion, the Prophet and his Companions came upon a group of women and children. One woman had lost her child and was looking for him, her breasts flowing with milk. When she found her child, she joyfully placed him in her bosom, and started to nurse him. The Prophet asked his Companions: “Do you think that this woman could throw her son in the fire?” They answered “No.” He then said: “Allah is more merciful to His Servants than this woman to her son” (Bukhari and Muslim).

On another occasion, the Prophet saw a woman running in the hot sun searching for her son. When she found him, she clutched him to her breast saying: “My son! My son!” The Companions of the Prophet witnessed this touching scene and wept. Delighted to see their mercy, the Prophet said: “Do you wonder at this woman’s mercy (*rahmah*) for her child? By Him in Whose hand is my soul, on the Day of Judgment, Allah shall show more mercy (*rahmah*) toward His believing servant than this woman has shown to her son” (Bukhari).

On yet another occasion, the Prophet said that: “On the day that He created the heavens and the earth, God created a hundred *rahmahs*, each of which is as great as the space which lies between heaven and earth. And He sent one *rahmah* down to Earth, by which a mother has *rahmah* for her child” (Muslim).

There are also several sayings stressing the symbolism of the womb such as: “I am Allah and I am the All-Merciful. I created the womb and I gave it a name derived from My own name” (Ahmad); “The womb is attached to the Throne” (Muslim), and “The womb is a branch of the All-Merciful” (Bukhari).

Besides the Qur’an and the Sunnah, which offer ample examples of Paternal and Maternal Attributes, images of Allah as both Mother and Father abound in Islamic

literature. As Jalal al-Din al-Rumi says: “Even if the mother is all mercy, observe God’s mercy in the father’s severity” (Rumi. *Diwan* 12409; cf. Schimmel, *Triumphal Sun* 128).

Twelver Shi‘ite theologians have also divided the names of Allah into eternal names and non-eternal names, that is, in attributes which existed prior to the Creation, and attributed which manifested themselves after Creation. While Allah was always and will ever be One, He was not always an active Creator. And while Allah was always Merciful, His Mercy could only manifest itself after creation; otherwise, there was nothing towards which He could be merciful. As Shaykh al-Saduq explains:

For example, we say that God was forever Hearing, Seeing, Omniscient, Wise, Omnipotent, Having power, Living, Self-existent, One and Eternal. And these are His personal attributes. and we do not say that He was from ever Creating, Doing, Intending, pleased, displeased, Giving sustenance, Speaking; because these virtues describe His Actions; and they are not eternal; it is not allowed to say that God was doing all these actions from eternity. The reason for this distinction is obvious. Actions need an object. For example, if we say that God was giving sustenance from ever, then we will have to admit the existence of sustained thing from ever. In other words, we will have to admit that the world was from ever. But it is against our belief that nothing except God is Eternal.

The division of attributes between eternal and non-eternal names is also a symbol of *Tawhid*.

Muslim theologians, both Sunni and Shi‘i, have traditionally divided the Most Beautiful Names of Allah into Attributes of Incomparability, and Attributes of Comparability. All Divine Attributes can be understood in terms of Allah’s Incomparability. As the Holy Qur’an states: “Nothing is like Him” (42:11). As such, every Attribute of Allah can be used in this sense while professing the *Shahadah*: “There is no real but the Real”; “There is no truth but the Truth”; “There is no light but the Light” and so forth.

Historically, Muslim theologians have been divided into those who believe in *Tanzih* or transcendence and those who believe in *Tashbih* or immanence. The proponents of immanence hold that Allah is present in all things while the proponents of transcendence believe that Allah is above His Creation. Rather than seeing these positions as contradictory, they can readily be reconciled in the realm of *Tawhid*.

The proponents of transcendence or incomparability point to the following verses in their support: “Nothing is like Him” (42:11), and “No vision can grasp Him, but His

Grasp is over all vision” (6:103). The proponents of immanence or similarity cite the following verses in their support: “And to Allah belong the East and the West. And in whichever direction you turn, there is the Face of Allah. Truly Allah is Vast, All-Knowing” (2:115); “We are nearer to him than the jugular vein” (50:16); “with you where you are” (57:4); “It is not you who slew; it was Allah. When you threw, it was not your act, but Allah’s” (8:17). The idea of transcendence is clearly conveyed in the following sacred sayings:

God the All-Mighty says: “O man! I was ill, but you did not visit me.” Man says, “My Lord! You are the Lord of all the realms, how can I visit You?” God says, “Do you not know that so-and-so of my servants got ill, but you did not visit him. If you had visited him, you would have found Me with him. (Muslim)

God the All-Mighty says: “My Servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties that I have imposed upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, his foot with which he walks... (Bukhari)

The belief in transcendence is espoused by the followers of exoteric Islam while the belief in immanence is espoused by the followers of esoteric Islam. Although these theological differences have divided Muslims since the dawn of Islam, neither position can be exclusive. The first is associated with Allah’s Right Hand, which symbolizes mercy, and the second is associated with his Left Hand which symbolizes wrath. According to Murata, “God is similar in His Incomparability and Incomparable in His Similarity. Both positions must be maintained if perfect knowledge is to be achieved” (Murata, Sachiko. *The Tao of Islam*. Albany: SUNY P, 1992: 51-52). Consequently, His Transcendence is certainly not in conflict with His Immanence. The balance between both positions is what is endorsed by spiritual masters such as Ibn al-‘Arabi. As the latter explains in chapter three of his *Fusus al-hikam*: “If you speak of incomparability, you delimit. / And if you speak of similarity, you define. / If you speak of both, you have hit the mark. / You are a leader and a lord in the Gnostic sciences” (Ibn al-‘Arabi, *Fusus al-hikam*).

In trying to articulate the purest form of *Tawhid* possible, Isma‘ili theologians use the dialect of double negation. They say, for example: He is Merciful, yet He is also not Merciful. He exists, but He also does not exist. The first positive statement affirms

that God possesses the attribute while the second negative statement keeps from limiting Him to that particular attribute. For the Isma‘ili, unity expresses duality, and duality expresses unity.

The Attributes of Almighty Allah are further subdivided into various categories. Individual names like *Rahman* and *Rahim* express a duality of degree. *Rahman* refers to the fundamental mercy which permeates all things while *Rahim* refers to the secondary mercy which may be held back. *Rahman*, which is stronger than *Rahim*, applies to all of existence. *Rahim* is the mercy which is manifested in Heaven and whose opposite, Wrath, is manifested in Hell. But the *Rahman* overrides them all. As Allah said: “My Mercy prevails over my Wrath” (Bukhari).

For many Muslim mystics, the concept of Divine Unity embraces a Divine Duality: *Ahadiyyat al-Ahad*, the Unity of One, and *Ahadiyyat al-kathrah*, the Unity of Many. As Murata explains: “In respect to His Self, God possesses the Unity of the One, but in respect of His names, He possesses the Unity of Manyness” (Murata, Sachiko. *The Tao of Islam*. Albany: SUNY P, 1992: 58-59). This is why Ibn al-‘Arabi used to refer to Allah as *al-Wahid al-Kathir* or the One/Many. Allah is One in Essence, but many in the relationships He has with the cosmos. Muslim mystics also speak of *Ahadiyyah*, Allah’s Exclusive Unity and *Wahidiyyah* or Allah’s Inclusive Unity. The Exclusive Unity applies to Allah Himself while the Inclusive Unity or Universality envisages Allah as the Source of Creation. The Names of Almighty Allah are also divided into Differentiated Names or *Tafsil* and Undifferentiated Names or *Ijmal*.

For Twelver Shi‘ites and Isma‘ilis, the concept of *Tawhid* is the solution to many theological debates. Take, for example, the question of free will, *Qadr*, and predestination, *Jabr*, which have divided the majority of the Muslim world. According to the Mu‘tazilites, Allah had given guidance to humanity; however, their ultimate destiny depended on themselves. In other words, they had the choice to be guided or misguided, good or bad. According to the Sunni traditionalists, however, the final fate of humanity has been predetermined by Almighty Allah. The solution to the problem was to be found among the Twelver and Sevener Shi‘ites who argued in favor of an “intermediate” solution between the absolute predestination of the Ash‘ari and the Mu‘tazili doctrine of freedom or *Tafwid*. Both the Imami and the Isma‘ili base their arguments on a famous tradition from Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq which says: “*la jabra wa la tafwida bal amrun bayna amrayn*: Neither *Jabr* nor *Tafwid*; but something intermediate between the two [extreme] alternatives” (Mutahhari, Murtaza. “An Introduction to ‘ilm al-kalam.” *al-Tawhid* 2: 2

(Jan.1985). Internet: <http://www.al-islam.org/al-tawhid/kalam.htm>). This is just one of many examples in which Shi'ite theologians follow the "middle path" (2:143) of *Tawhid* or Divine Unity in finding solutions to doctrinal differences.

Although *Tawhid* is typically translated as "oneness," the term derives from the Arabic root *wahhada* which means "to unite, to join, to combine, and to gather." Although Allah is absolutely and utterly One, and Islam adheres to the strictest and purest form of monotheism possible, *Tawhid* literally means "unity" which means "to bring together." As Murata explains, "As soon as we accept the principle of singularity, duality is demanded by Unity and Unity by duality" (*The Tao of Islam*. Albany: SUNY P, 1992: 58). As the Ikhwan al-Safa' expressed: "God is truly one in every respect and meaning, so it is not permissible that any created and originated thing be truly one. On the contrary, it is necessary that it be a one that is multiple, dual, and paired" (*Rasa'il* III 201-2). Although Allah is One in Essence, He is Dual in Divine Names, and Multiple in His Manifestations. Allah is that Irresistible Primal Principle to which everything and everyone is drawn. He was the First for He is Allah. He is the Last for He is Allah. Since everything is derived from Allah, and everything will return to Allah, there is truly none other than Allah.

Chapter 28

The Image of the Road in Islam¹³¹

While the religion of Islam has many symbols: the star and the crescent; the minaret; Islamic flags; the profession of faith “There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah” [*La ilaha illa Allah; Muhammadun rasul Allah*]; the proclamation “Allah is the Greatest” [*Allahu Akbar*]; geometric patterns; the beard; the veil [*hijab*]; the fountain [*al-kawthar*]; the numbers 1, 5, 7, 12 and 14; the Ka‘aba, the greeting “Peace be upon you” [*salamu ‘alaykum*]; all forms of worship [*‘ibadat*]; ablutions [*wudu’*], ritual prayers [*salah*], fasting [*siyyam*] and the pilgrimage [*hajj*]; the image of the road [*al-sirat; al-tariq; al-sabil, al-nahj*] is among the most important symbolic expressions in Arabic-Islamic literature, language and culture.

The image of the road, in its multiple manifestations as path, route, way, highway, pass and bridge, appears in the Arabic language in the form of various idiomatic expressions invoking guidance including: *Tariq al-salamah*, “May your road be peaceful”; *Tariq al-khayr*, “May your road be good”; *Fi sabil Allah*, “In the way of Allah”; *Allah yahdik*, “May Allah guide you”; personal names including *Sabil*, or “Way”; *Rashid* or “One who is guided”; *Irshad* or “Guidance,” each related, literally or figuratively, to Divine Direction or *hidayah*, a concept intrinsically linked to the image of the straight path as agreed upon by Qur’anic commentators.

The image of the road, the “straight and middle path,” is a primary principle in traditional Islamic thought, governing all domains: be it politics, economics, law or jurisprudence. Muslims are enjoined to moderation for as Almighty Allah says: “We have appointed you a middle nation” (2:143). In the field of politics and economics, Muslims are reminded to be neither conservatives nor liberals, neither socialists nor capitalists as embodied in Imam Khomeini’s famous slogan “Neither East nor West.” In the area of Islamic Law, or *shari‘ah*, Islam calls for moderation: “do not transgress limits” (2:190). In Islamic Jurisprudence or *fiqh*, jurists follow the principle of moderation which states that, when two legitimate solutions exist, opt for the easiest one. Even in the area of Islamic mysticism, we find many later orders who taught that the middle way, between excessive hunger and excessive eating, was the safest for the disciple’s progress (Schimmel 117).

¹³¹ This chapter was originally published in *Proceedings from the Image of the Road Conference*. Eds. Will Wright and Steven Kaplan. Pueblo: SISSI, Colorado State U-Pueblo, 2005: 329-36.

The image of the road appears in the names of classical Islamic books like Imam ‘Ali’s *Nahj al-balaghah* / *The Peak of Eloquence*; Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq’s *Misbah al-shari‘ah wa-miftah al-haqiqah* / *The Lantern of the Path*; and Ibn Naqib’s *‘Umdat al-salik* / *The Reliance of the Traveler*. It is also found in other works, including *al-Siyyasah al-multazamah fi nahj al-Imam al-Hasan* by Muhammad al-Musawi; *al-Nahj al-‘alawi fi al-fiqh al-islami* by Muhammad ‘Ali Hallum; *Ibn Baz faqih al-sa‘ud: muhakamat al-nahj al-wahhabi* by Salih al-Wardani; *Nahj al-burdah* by Ahmad Shawqi; *Wa-‘alayhi wadh al-nahj* by Salim al-Bushra; *Shart fi al-Qur‘an ‘ala nahj al-lisaniyyat* by ‘Abd al-Salam al-Masaddi and Muhammad al-Hadi al-Tarablusi as well as *Nahj al-shari‘ah wa-al-qanun fi taqrir al-ahkam* by Ahmad Muwafi.

In Arabic-Islamic literature, language and culture, the image of the road comes from the religion of Islam, its sacred text, the Holy Qur’an, and the Prophetic Traditions, the *ahadith*, namely the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and, for Twelver Shi‘ites, the apothegms of the Immaculate Imams--appearing in both exoteric and esoteric exegesis--literally, linguistically, allegorically, symbolically, religiously, theologically and philosophically.

In the Holy Qur’an, the foremost symbol of the path comes from verse 6 of *Surat al-Fatihah*, the Opening Chapter, the Mother of the Book, the Core of the Qur’an, which reads “Guide us on the straight path” or *ihdina al-sirat al-mustaqim*. According to Tabarsi’s *Tafsir majma’ al-bayan fi tafsir al-Qur‘an* and ‘Allamah Tabataba‘i’s *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur‘an*, *al-sirat* means “the straight path” and is derived from *sarattu sartan*, “I swallowed it up completely,” because this clear path swallows its walkers, without letting them go. According to al-Tabari, “The Arabs use the term *sirat* in reference to every deed and statement whether righteous or wicked. Hence the Arabs would describe the honest person as being straight and the wicked person as being crooked” (Ibn Kathir). The word *al-sirat* [path] appears 46 times in the Holy Qur’an; the word *sabil* [way] occurs 166 times; the word *subul* [ways] 10 times and the word *tariq* [road], 4 times, not to mention their multiple implicit appearances. The word *sirat*, written with both *sin* and *sad* in ancient times, is one of the few words in Arabic which is both masculine and feminine, making the path to God gender inclusive.

According to Sunnis, Shi‘ites and Sufis, the “straight path” mentioned in the Qur’an refers to Islam in contrast to “the path of those who go astray” and “the path of those who incur your wrath” which, according to some Islamic sources, refers to Christianity and Judaism (Vernet 4). According to the Prophet,

Allah has set an example: a *sirat* (straight path) that is surrounded by two walls on both sides, with several open doors within the walls covered with curtains. There is a caller on the gate of the *sirat* who heralds, ‘O people! Stay on the path and do not deviate from it.’ Meanwhile, a caller from above the path is also warning any person who wants to open any of these doors, ‘Woe unto you! Do not open it, for if you open it you will pass through.’ The straight path is Islam, the two walls are Allah’s set limits, while the doors resemble what Allah has prohibited. The caller on the gate of the *sirat* is the Book of Allah, while the caller above the *sirat* is Allah’s admonishment in the heart of every Muslim. (Ahmad)

In Sunni thought in general, and Salafi ideology in particular, the *sirat al-mustaqim*, the straight path, is typically viewed as one, consistent with a literalist, essentialist and reductionist interpretation of Islam. As Tabari explains in his *Tafsir, jami’ al-bayan fi tafsir al-Qur’an*, “The ‘*ummah* [Muslim Nation] agreed that *sirat al-mustaqim* is the path without crookedness [*la ‘iwaja fih*], according to the language of the Arabs.” For the Wahhabis, however, these words are not sufficiently clear and exclusionary; as a result, they mistranslate them as “the straight path without branches,” which is not only incorrect but a manifestation of their belief in a single path, to the exclusion of all others, and that it consists of their Salafi sect (www.tafsir.com). This cult-like conception is repeatedly reinforced in their writings.

According to Tabari, the “straight path” is interpreted as Islam or the Qur’an. According to Tabarsi, there are various opinions: for ‘Ali, it is the Book of Allah; for Jabir and Ibn ‘Abbas, it is Islam; for Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah, it is the religion of Allah, and for others, it is the Prophet Muhammad and the Imams who followed him. While Sunni scholars interpret the “straight path” as being Allah, Islam, the Qur’an and the Prophet, they hold that they are one and the same. In *Tafsir bahr al-‘ulum*, Samarqandi quotes a *hadith* to support this contention. He relates a tradition on the authority of Ibn Mas‘ud which says that the Prophet drew a straight line with various crooked lines beside it. The Prophet explained that: “This one is the straight path and the others are paths. At the head of each path is a devil encouraging people to follow it.” Then he recited: “Verily, this is My way, leading straight: follow it: follow not [other] paths: they will scatter you about from His [great] path: thus doth He command you that ye may be righteous” (6:153). Despite the fact that some Sunni scholars believe in the sole nature of the straight path, their schools of jurisprudence are nonetheless divided in

ways, *madhahib* and paths, *manahij*, much as the Sufis denominate their religious orders as *turuq* [sing. *tariqah*] or ways, each following a particular *silsilah* or spiritual chain of initiation.

Diagram 1: The Sunni and Salafi conception of the straight path

Among Shi'ites, however, a multiplicity of paths is acknowledged, consistent with the Prophetic Tradition which states that "The numbers of paths to God is equal to the number of human souls" (Chittick, 1989: 52, Note 1). 'Allamah Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, the Shi'ite commentator of the Qur'an, explains that "the straight path itself may be divided in various 'traffic lanes,' ways or branches." He observes that "Allah repeatedly mentions *al-sirat* [path] and *al-sabil* [way] in the Qur'an; but He has never attributed to Himself except one straight path; although He attributes several ways to Himself (29:69)." Tabataba'i stresses the fact that "the ways" is in plural and "the straight path" is in singular explaining that "[e]ither 'the straight path' is the same thing as 'the ways,' or 'the ways' on going further join together and then merge into the straight path." He further explains that:

the ways of Allah are one with the straight path; but sometimes a way - the way of the believers, of the followers of the Prophet of those who turn towards Allah or any other way - suffers from some kind of deterioration, although the straight path is immune from all defects and imperfections ... In short, the ways are of various grades near or distant; safe or unsafe; clean or unclean - but all are in the straight path, or, let us say, are one with the straight path. From the above analysis it may be seen that the straight path is a sort of controller of all the ways leading to Allah. We may say that a way leading to Allah leads a man to Him as long as it remains one with the straight path; but the straight path leads to Allah unconditionally, without any if or but.

According to Tabataba'i, there are many ways leading to Allah, guidance for one differs from those of others with each way having its own special guidance of its own, as is hinted to in the verses: "And [as for] those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them unto Our ways; and Allah is most surely with the doers of good" (29:69).

In Shi'ite tradition, the "straight path" has a rich repertoire of meanings. According to Imam 'Ali, "The straight path, in this world, is that which stops short of

excesses and rises above shortcomings, and remains straight; and, in the next world, it is the path of the believers [leading them] to the Garden” (*Ma’ani al-Akhbar*). Imam al-Sadiq explains that the straight path is the path that leads to God’s love, to His Garden, and that protects people from following their own vain desires (*Ma’ani al-Akhbar*). In another *ahadith*, the Sixth Imam says that the straight path “is the knowledge of Allah” (*Ma’ani al-Akhbar*).

In Shi‘ite tradition, the “straight path” referred to in *Surat al-Fatihah* also refers to *al-Sirat*, the bridge over hell, which every human being must cross as explained in the Qur’an: “Not one of you but will pass over it: this is, with thy Lord, a Decree which must be accomplished” (19:71). According to both Shi‘ite and Sunni sources, it will be made wide for believers yet thinner than a hair, sharper as a sword and hotter than fire for unbelievers; true believers will cross it quickly and with ease like a flash of lightning; some will pass it with difficulty and yet be saved, and others will fall from it into the depths of hell (Merrick 406 Note 74; Qummi, 1942: 71-72).

In Shi‘ite tradition, the “straight path” is often personified as being the *Ahl al-Bayt*, the Prophet Muhammad and his Household, namely ‘Ali, his son-in-law, Fatimah his daughter, and their 11 direct descendants. Ibn Abbas is reported to have said that “the straight path” refers to the love of Muhammad and his Family (Tabataba’i). According to Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq, “The straight path is *Amir al-Mu‘minin* [the Leader of the Believers]” (Qummi, 1970; Qummi, 1960; al-‘Ayyashi). In yet another tradition, the Sixth Imam says that: “‘Ali is the *sirat* whom God entrusted with the knowledge of everything in heaven and earth. He is God’s *wali* [vicegerent] over the people and the Trustee of His Truth” (Bursi 140). In another tradition, the Sixth Imam explains that there are two paths, one in this world and one in the other. As for the path in this world, it is the Imam whose obedience is obligatory; he who knows him in this world and follows his guidance, shall proceed on the path which is over hell in the next world; and whosoever does not know him in this world, his foot shall slip [over the bridge] in the next world, and he shall fall down into the fire of hell (*Ma’ani al-Akhbar*). Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, speaking on behalf of the Household of the Prophet, proclaimed that: “We are the gates of Allah, and we are the straight path, and we are the [treasure] chest of His Knowledge, and we are, the interpreters of His revelation, and we are the pillars of His Oneness, and we are the place of His secret” (*Ma’ani al-Akhbar*). According to ‘Allamah Qummi, also known as Shaykh Saduq, one of the founding fathers of Shi‘ite scholarship: “*Al-sirat* means the names of the Proofs of Allah,” namely, the Twelve Immaculate Imams (1942:

71). According to Qummi, he who acknowledges and obeys the Imams in this world, Allah will grant him permission to traverse *al-Sirat*, the bridge over Hell, on the Day of Resurrection for, as the Prophet said to ‘Ali: “On the Day of Resurrection, I will sit near the Bridge with you and Gabriel, and no one will cross the Bridge unless he can produce a writ [of absolution] by reason of devotion [*wilayah*] to you.” (72)

According to Qummi, *al-Sirat*, the bridge which spans Hell, passes through various mountain passes, each with a specific name: some are called *fard* or religious obligation, others *amr* or command; and yet others *nahy* or prohibition. If a human being has neglected any of his duties, he will be stopped and Allah will demand His dues. Finally, if he escapes from all the stages, he will arrive at *Dar al-Baqa’*, the Abode of Permanence (1942: 72). As Qummi explains, the name of one of the passes is *al-wilayah*, the love of Imams, before which all humankind will be stopped and questioned regarding their love for ‘Ali, the Leader of the Believers, and for the Imams who followed him, for as the Qur’an says, “stop them for they must be questioned” (37:24) (1942: 72). Those who answer correctly will be saved, those who are unable to respond will be hurled into Hell, a belief consistent with Imam ‘Ali’s saying: “I am Allah’s division between Heaven and Hell” (Kulayni 1: 196-98).

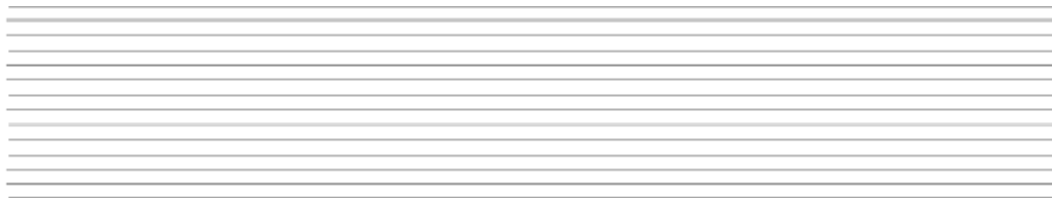


Diagram 2: The Shi‘ite and Sufi concept of the straight path: The Highway of Parallel Paths

The Sufis, like the Shi‘ites, believe that the “straight path” is a balance between extremes; equilibrium between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law, between the law, *al-shari‘ah* and mysticism, *tasawwuf*, *‘irfan* and *ma‘rifah*; it is the avoidance of extremes, following the milestones of moderation. According to Ibn Ajiba’s *Tafsir al-bahr al-madid fi tafsir al-Qur’an al-majid*:

The straight path is following the *shari‘ah* outwardly and being humble inwardly. It is following the *shari‘ah* outwardly and the *haqiqah* inwardly. Your appearance is submission, but your interior is freedom. The straight path which Allah has commanded us to seek is the balance between the *shari‘ah* and the truth.

The Sufis, like the Shi'ites, acknowledge a wide array of ways. For them, the mystical path is a parallel path, a ladder of love towards spiritual perfection, a staircase that leads to heaven, on which the traveler slowly and patiently climbs towards higher levels of experience (Schimmel 105). According to Sufi thought, all human beings are on a road [*shar'*] designated by God. Each individual is a "wayfarer" or *salik*. The word used in the Qur'an to refer to "wayfarers" is *ibn sabil*, namely, "the son of the path" (2:177; 2:215; 4:36; 8:41; 8:41; 9:60; 17:26; 30:38; 59:7). Interpreted by Sunni commentators of the Qur'an as merely "traveler," in Sufism, the *salik* and the *ibn sabil* are symbolically charged; they are adepts on a spiritual journey [*sayr wa suluk*]; they are travelers to *tawhid*, the existential affirmation of Divine Unity (al-Qushayri); they are wayfarers on the path of Allah as embodied in the example of al-Khidr, the patron saint of travelers, the immortal who drank from the water of life and whose encounter with Moses appears in the Holy Qur'an (18:60-82).



Diagram 3: The Sufi Ladder of Spiritual Perfection



Diagram 4: The Sufi Stairway to Salvation

According to the Sufis, the first stage of the path is abiding by the *shari'ah*, the Divine Law, which literally means "road" or "path" (Qur'an 45:18; Nasr, 2002: 115; Larus 681). One of the 99 Names of Allah is "the Legislator" or *al-Shari'* which literally means "the one who guides on the path." The second stage of the path is the *tariqah*, the Order or the Fraternity, which literally means "path." Finally, the third stage of the path is the *haqiqah* or Divine Truth which can only be reached by following the spiritual paths of the *shari'ah*, the *via purgativa*, and the *tariqah*, the *via illuminativa*, in order to reach the *haqiqah*, the Divine Truth, the mystical quest for *unio mystica*. As Annemarie Schimmel explains:

The *tariqah*, the "path" on which the mystics walk, has been defined as 'the path which comes out of the *shari'ah*, for the main road is called *shar'*, the path, *tariq.'* This derivation shows that the Sufis considered the path of mystical education a branch of that highway that consists of the God-given law, on which every Muslim is supposed to walk. No path can exist without a main road from

which it branches out; no mystical experience can be realized if the binding injunctions of the *shari'ah* are not followed faithfully first. The path, *tariqah*, however, is narrower and more difficult to walk and leads the adept--called *salik*, "wayfarer"-- in his *suluk*, "wandering," through different stations [*maqam*] until he perhaps reaches, more or less slowly, his goal, the perfect *tawhid*, the existential confession that God is One. (98-99)

This tripartite path to God can be traced back to a tradition in which the Prophet states that: "The *shari'ah* are my words [*aqwali*], the *tariqah* are my actions [*a'malib*], and the *haqiqah* is my interior states [*ahwali*]," demonstrating that the *shari'ah*, the Path of Divine Law, the *tariqah*, the Sufi Path, and the *haqiqah*, Divine Truth, are mutually interdependent (Schimmel 105).

As we have seen, both Sunni and Shi'ite scholars have traditionally viewed the path as a line, single or multiple, moving horizontally from point A to point B. While some Sufi scholars share this conception, others have viewed the straight path as a vertical ladder of spiritual perfection and yet others, have embraced the image of sphere, an interpretation more consistent with Islamic circular symbolism.

At the heart of the Islamic universe is the Ka'aba, both earthly and ethereal, towards which all Muslims turn in prayer and around which they perform *tawaf* or circumambulation during the greater and lesser pilgrimage, counter clock-wise, a motion in universal harmony with cosmic cycles. This circular symbolism is found in Islamic art, architecture and social structure. When Muslims gather, for personal or religious reasons, they sit in a circle, a *halaqah*, which is equally used to describe a religious study circle. When the Sufis gather, they form a circle, a *halaqah*, around a pivot, or *qutb*. When Muslims invoke the Divine Name [*dhikr*], the royal path to spiritual realization, they use a circular rosary to perform *tasbih*, from the root *sabbaha*, which not only means "to declare His glory" but also "to rotate" and "to orbit" (Qur'an 17:44; Larus 603).

In Islamic mysticism, the *wasat* or center is the axis around which the world rotates and is referred to as the *qutb* or pole, generally represented by a wheel, referring to the absolute dominion over the worldly order. As Luis Alberto Vittor explains, the title of *wasat*, center, *qutb*, pole, and *rukhn*, pillar, is applied to Imam al-Mahdi, the Twelfth Imam, the Spiritual Pole of the Age, *Qutb al-Aqtab*, the Pole of the Poles, around which the world revolves.

Islamic circular symbolism is particularly prevalent among later Islamic sages, especially the Sufis who spoke of the hierarchy of the *shari'ah*, the Divine Law, the

tariqah, the Spiritual Path and the *haqiqah*, the Divine Truth, which is the origin of both. As Sayyed Hosein Nasr explains:

Islam is then envisaged as a circle whose center is the *haqiqah*. The *radi* of the circle are the *туруq* (plural of *tariqah*), later identified with the Sufi orders, and the circumference is the *shari'ah*. Each Muslim is like a point on the circumference, whose totality composes the Islamic community, or *ummah*. To reach the *haqiqah*, one must first stand on the circumference, that is, practice the *shari'ah*, and then follow the *tariqah*, or Path to God, whose end is the Center, God Himself, or the *haqiqah*. (2002: 60)

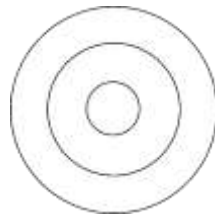


Diagram 5: The Sufi concept of the straight path

In Sufi philosophy, the soul is the cosmos and the cosmos is the soul, so much so that the primary function of Sufi cosmology and sciences is to provide a prototype of the cosmos for the traveler upon the path (Nasr, 1973: 46). As Shaykh al-‘Arabi al-Darqawi explains: “The soul is an immense thing; it is the whole cosmos, since it is a copy of it. Everything which is in the cosmos is to be found in the soul; equally everything in the soul is in the cosmos” (4). In other words, the cosmos reflects aspects of the spiritual world in the mirror of the material and temporal (Nasr, 1973: 28). As such, Sufis view the straight path as a mystical quest, the journey of the soul from the outward to the inward, from the periphery to the Center, from the form to the meaning; it is at once a penetration to the center of the soul and a migration to the abode beyond the cosmos which are in reality but a single locus where the Divine Essence resides, the Presence which is at once completely our-Self and totally other than ourselves” (1973: 29).

In order to explain the cosmological concept of the celestial soul and its journey to its Center, Frithjof Schuon evokes the symbolism of the spider’s web with its cosmic compartments and their contents:

[J]ust as the relationship of the center to space cannot be conceived except in this form of the spider’s web with its two modes of projection--one continuous and the other discontinuous--so the relationship of Principle to manifestation--which makes up the Universe--is only conceivable as a combination between worlds

arranged according to gradation around the Divine Center and beings who pass through them. To speak of ‘Existence’ is to proclaim the relationship between the receptacle and content, or between the static and the dynamic; the journey of souls through life, death and resurrection is nothing other than the very life of the macro-cosmos; even in our experience in this world we pass through days and nights, summers and winters; essentially we are beings who pass through states; and Existence is not to be conceived of otherwise. Our whole reality converges towards that unique ‘moment’ which alone matters: our meeting with the Center. (82-83)

According to Schuon, even the Qur’an is a picture of the cosmos: the chapters [*suwar*] are the worlds and the verses [*ayat*] are the beings (82).

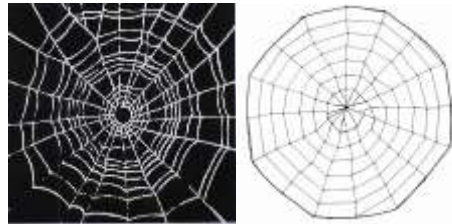


Diagram 6 & 7: Schuon’s concept of the straight path: The Spider’s Web

In line with such circular symbolism, and for the sole purpose of scholastic philosophy [*kalam*] and intellectual exposition [*bayan*], we can conceive of the straight path as rays of light and Divine Truth as an imploded or inverted sun, a black hole, an event horizon, the sublime singularity, the absolute axis, an irresistible and inescapable force which draws all light. Although individual in origin, the rays or ways to Allah transcend multiplicity and attain singularity, the refracted rays becoming a totality, the many becoming One in universal unity. While each ray is a way, the countless rays combine, and unite in the Divine, leaving the lost to stray, without a way, damned in darkness, devoid of light and Divine Love, an interpretation consistent with the Qur’anic definition of the straight path as *sirati Allahi*, the path of Allah (42: 53), the Swallower of Souls, like space flowing into a black hole, “and to Him is our return” (2:1 56); “Everything will perish except His own face ... and to Him will ye be brought back” (28: 88).



Diagram 8 & 9: Morrow's concept of the straight path: The Black Hole

As we have seen, the image of the road appears in the Arabic language in the form of idiomatic expressions; in the names of people, journals, magazines, books and businesses, and throughout Arabic-Islamic literature where it is derived from the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic Traditions and is endowed with a multitude of literal and metaphorical interpretations. As we observed, Sunni and Salafi scholars, in their literalist line, believe in a single and unique path, devoid of branches. The Shi'ites and the Sufis, however, accept various paths to God and multiple interpretations of Islam, making them the farthest removed from the fundamentalist fallacy. On the basis of this study, it is evident that the road is one of the fundamental symbols found in Arabic-Islamic literature, language and culture, with far reaching philosophical implications in the realm of religious pluralism.

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Chapter 29

The Origin of the Name *Allah*¹³²

1. Introduction

According to Muslim tradition, the most beautiful names of Allāh [*asma' Allah al-ḥusna*] are ninety-nine in number, all of which are found, in one form or another, in the Holy Qur'an (7:180; 17:110; 20:8; 59:24). As the essence of Allah, Islam, and the Qur'an, the divine names have played an important role in the interpretation of Islamic scripture.¹³³ Invoked in prayer and in common speech, the divine names are also employed during *dhikr* or remembrance of Allah. These ninety-nine names, one hundred minus one, form the core of the Allah Lexicon, and the source from which the original body of expressions were drawn.¹³⁴ In the following pages we will examine the most beautiful names and how they form the philosophical foundation of the Allah Lexicon. We will see that among the Sufis, be they Sunni or Shi'i, the ninety-nine names take on heightened significance as steps along the path of spiritual perfection.¹³⁵ Beyond its evident social functions, the Allah Lexicon belongs to the spiritual sphere, reaching its peak in the universal archetype of the Perfect Person who, by reaching the state of sublime submission, has become the microcosmic manifestation of all the divine names.

¹³² This chapter was originally published as the first section of "The Most Beautiful Names: The Philosophical Foundation of the Allah Lexicon," which forms chapter 5 of *Arabic, Islam, and the Allah Lexicon: How Language Shapes our Conception of God* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2006). For references, kindly consult the bibliography for the subsequent chapter.

¹³³ In fact, so much has been written about the the *asma' al-husna* that they represent a literary genre. The early philological treatises dealing with the divine names include those of the two al-Zajjaj (d. 923; d. 949), the lost treatises of al-Mubarrad (d. 898), as well as the works of Abu 'Ali al-Jubba'i (d. 915), and Abu Zayd al-Balkhi (d. 934). After these seminal works follow the great treatises influenced by Ash'ari thought, such as the *Tafsir asma' Allah al-husna* of Abu Mansur al-Baghdadi (d. 1037), the *Kitab al-asma' wa al-sifat* of Abu Bakr al-Bayhaqi (d. 1066), and the *al-Tahbir fi al-tadhkir* of al-Qushayri (d. 1072). Two of the most important treatises include *al-Maqṣad al-asna'* of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111), the *Lawami al-bayyināt* of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 1210), and the equally important *Sharh asma' Allah al-husna* of Ibn Barrajan (d. 1141) without forgetting Ibn al-'Arabi's (d. 1240) *Kitab kashf al-ma'na 'ann sirr asma' Allah al-husna*. There is also a large body of representative works which deal, in part, with the divine names, including: Abu Hatim's (d. 934?) *Zina*, Ash'ari's (d. 931?) *Maqalat*, Halimi's (d. 1012) *Minhaj*, Ibn Furak's (d. 1015) *Mujarrad*, 'Abd al-Jabbar's (d. 1025) *Mughni*, Abu Ya'la's (d. 1066) *Mu'tamad*, Juwayni's (d. 1085) *Irshad*, Iji's (1355?) *Mawaqif*, among many more. Most of these works were written by philologists and specialists in *kalam* [scholastic philosophy]. However, a large body of commentaries on the divine names was written by Muslim mystics. Considering their importance in Islamic thought, it is remarkable that Western scholars have paid such little attention to the divine names (Murata 7).

¹³⁴ Ninety-nine is also a topological number to indicate incompleteness, i.e. Allah has one majestic hidden name.

¹³⁵ For more on the image of the road, in its multiple manifestations as path, route, way, highway, pass, and bridge, in Islam, see John Morrow's "The Image of the Road in Arabic-Islamic Literature, Language and Culture."

Let us now examine the ninety-nine most beautiful names, commencing with the name *Allah* itself, whose philological origin has been one of the most difficult to discern, and which continues to puzzle Arabic linguists.

2. The Origin of the Name *Allah*¹³⁶

While the Arabic language has one the richest vocabularies in the world, *Allah*, its most important content word, the one with the highest functional yield, has been a source of controversy since the dawn of Arabic linguistics.¹³⁷ In fact, some speculate that the mysterious origin of the name Allah may be a reflection of the mystery of the Divine Essence.

According to Razi (d. 1210), al-Khalil, Sibawayhi (d. 8th c.), and most of the formulators of the Muslim fundamentals [*al-uṣūliyyun*], held that the word *Allah* was *murtajal*, namely, that it had no derivation.¹³⁸ The position of this group of scholars is summarized by Muḥammad ‘Ali in the following terms:

The word *Allah* being a proper name is *jamid*, that is to say, it is not derived from any other word. Nor has it any connection with the word *ilah* [god or object of worship], which is either derived from the root *aliha*, meaning *taḥayyara* or “he became astonished,” or it is a changed form of *walah* from the root *waliha*, which means “he became infatuated.” It is sometimes said that *Allah* is a contracted form of *al-ilah*, but that is a mistake, for if *al* in *Allah* were an additional prefix, the form *ya Allah*, which is correct, would not have been permitted since *ya al-ilah* or *ya al-Raḥman* are not permissible. Moreover, this supposition would mean that there were different gods [*alihah*, pl. of *ilah*], one of which became gradually known as *al-ilah* and was then contracted into *Allah*. This is against the facts,

¹³⁶ The etymological information on the word *Allah* and *ilah* is a composite of material drawn from Razi (d. 1210), Jubba’i (d. 915), Zamakhshari (d. 1144), Gibb, al-Nassir, Mosel, Owens, and Carter.

¹³⁷ The search for the origin of the word *Allah* has focused on two main issues: on the one hand, determining the origin of the word--namely, figuring out whether it was formed through certain internal mechanism--and, on the other, establishing those morphological mechanisms to explain how the word developed, from which elements it is composed, and what relationship they have between themselves. Arabic linguists were concerned with the lexical morphology of the new word. They were interested in determining whether it had a specific sense or meaning [*dalalah*] and whether it belonged to the category of proper nouns [*asma’ al-a’lam*]. If it was indeed a proper noun, they wanted to establish whether it was coined [*mawdu’*] to designate the Transcendental Being or whether it was derived [*mushtaq*] etymologically [*ishtiq*]. In the event that it developed etymologically, they wanted to determine whether it derived from a natural root or whether its root was substituted by means of ankylosis.

¹³⁸ For more on this subject, see: al-Farra’s (d. 822-3) *Ma’ani al-Qur’an*, Sibawayhi’s *Kitab*, and Zamakhshari’s (d. 1144) *al-Mufasssalu fi ‘ilm al-lughah*. As a secondary source, Baalbaki’s “The Book in the Grammatical Tradition,” in Atiyeh’s *The Book in the Islamic World*, can also be useful.

since Allah ‘has always been the name of the Eternal Being’ (Hughes). Nor has the word *Allah* ever been applied to any but the Divine Being, according to all authorities on Arabic lexicology. The Arabs had numerous *ilahs* or gods but none of them was ever called *Allah*, while a Supreme Being called *Allah* was recognized above them all as the Creator of the universe (29:61), and no other deity, however great, was so regarded. (‘Ali 156-57)

These arguments are echoed in Lane’s *Arabic-English Lexicon*, where he states that “*Allah*...is the proper name applied to the Being who exists necessarily, by Himself, comprising all the attributes of perfection, a proper name denoting the True God...the *al* being inseparable from it, not derived.”

According to another group of linguists, the word *Allah* was borrowed from the Hebrew *Eloh* or the Aramaic *Alaha*. Whether or not it was borrowed, the word *Allah* does indeed appear to be closely related to similar words found in Hebrew, Aramaic, and ancient Arabic or Sabaeen (Lane 82: *Oxford Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 61). In Genesis 1:1, the name for God is *Elohim*, a plural form of אֱלֹהִים [*eloh*]. This is undoubtedly the original pronunciation, but the Bible as it is pointed today, and in latter Hebrew, the word is *elo’ah*, with the accent on the “o.” If one looks up the root alef-lamed-heh (a-l-h) in Milon Ben-Y’hudaah’s *Ivri-Angli* [BenYehuda’s *Hebrew-English Dictionary*] one finds that the root itself is derived from an older word, *el*, meaning God, deity, power, strength. Whether alef-lamed-heh is derived from aleph-lamed it presently impossible to ascertain as little is known about the bilateral roots that may have been around in the earliest stages of Proto-Semitic. Without diacritical marks, the Hebrew *eloh* can easily be pronounced as *alah*. The pronunciation of *eloh* may be a later form of the original *alah*. The Canaanitic Shift, a linguistic phenomenon, supports this. In Hebrew, the following phonetic changes may have taken place: a>e; a>o, u>o, s>sh, b>v, hence you have *eloh* instead of *alah* and *musha* instead of *musa*, *shalom* instead of *salam*, and *navi* instead of *nabi*. Not surprisingly, the name for God is *alah* in Aramaic, *alaha* in Syriac, which is a dialect of Aramaic, both of which are related to the Proto-Semitic word for god which is *il* (Oshana). As Giron explains, there are “obvious linguistic and etymological connections between the respective words for God in these closely related Semitic languages [e.g. *Allah*, *Alah*, and *Eloh* being related to *Ilah*, *Eel*, and *El*, respectively].” He concludes that “the ancient Semitic names for God [*Allah* and *Elohim*] are actually the same.”

According to the majority of linguists, however, the name *Allah* is derived

[*mushtaqq*, *manqul*] from *al-ilah*, “the God,” “the One God” or, better yet, “the Divine.”¹³⁹ This of course is the same as the Hebrew *el*, the Ugaritic *il*, and the Akkadian *ilu*, all of which express the sense of “power.” If *Allah* is derived from *al-ilah*, then it is not of Hebrew or Aramaic origin. Whether Arabic is the mother of all Semitic languages, as some scholars claim, is highly controversial and is presently impossible to prove or disprove empirically.¹⁴⁰ Whether Semitic languages can even be subjected to the

¹³⁹ While there was no consensus on the matter, the majority of scholars upheld the theory of derivation [*ishtiqaq*], despite the fact that they could not agree upon its etymology. According to Razi (d. 1210) and Baydawi (d. 1296), eight derivations for *ilah* [god] were suggested. Abu Hashim gave *ilah* the sense of “one who is worshipped,” supposing a derivation from *aliha* which means “to adore” or “to worship” under a form equivalent to ‘*abada-ya’bud*. This etymology would be consistent with paradigm *fi’al* [-i-a-] where *ilah* acquires the passive sense of *maf’ul* with *ilah* being synonymous with *maluh*, *ma’bud*, or “adored.” The similarity between *ta’allaha* and *ta’abbada* or “devote oneself to worship” has been stressed by those who support this etymology. Those who supported the stance taken by al-Jubba’i (d. 933) argued that the pagan Arabs from *al-jahiliyyah* [The Days of Ignorance] called their idols *alihah* because they considered them worthy of worship. In his *Mishkat al-anwar*, al-Ghazali (d. 1111) suggest that *lh* (god) comes from the root w-l-y or “to turn” since all faces are “directed” in worship towards the Deity (112). Other etymologies included *al-lah*, the infinitive of l-y-h, “to be high,” or “to be veiled.”

Having generally agreed that *Allah* was derived from *ilah*, Arabic linguists tackled two questions: firstly, how does *Allah* derive from *ilah*? In other words, how did the ancient word *ilah* evolve into a new word like *Allah*? Secondly, what is the root of *ilah* and what did it mean? The most widely held hypothesis is that *Allah* is a name of majesty which expresses veneration [*ta’zim*, *tafkhim*]. According to this hypothesis, the word *Allah* was used to distinguish between the True Divinity and other deities. Rather than saying *ilah* or “god,” the prefix *al-* or “the” was added to make it definite, to specify “the God” or *al-ilah*. Arabic linguists theorized that, due to its constant use in the colloquial language, the interconsonantal /i/ of *al-ilah* was dropped, creating the proper noun *al-lah* or *Allah*, a process known in Arabic linguistics as *takhfif* [lightening], the equivalent of the law of least effort. The ambiguous *ilah* was thus supplanted by the new form *Allah*, which was infused with vitality and precision.

The change from *al-ilah* to *Allah* was explained phonetically in two different ways. According to the first explanation, the *hamzah*, the vowel /i/, disappeared as an independent sound to become the vowel of the previous *lam* /l/ *al-ilah*. As a result, the first *lam* /l/ lost its vowel, becoming “mute.” In other words, the initial *lam* /l/, having lost its phonetic function, was assimilated into the second *lam* /l/ to form *Allah*. The second explanation, which is the most simple, does not accept the intermediate stage of vocalization of the first *lam* /l/. It holds that the *hamza* was dropped and the *lam* /l/ from the unvocalized article *al-* came into contract with the *lam* /l/ from the word *ilah*. As a result of this transformation, the old medial *hamza* was subjected to the process of assimilation by which the first *hamzah* lost its sound, and the second *lam* /l/ was pronounced more intensely in the absence of any other vowel. This would explain why the second *lam* /l/ bears a *tashdid*, an auxiliary grapheme for duplication. Each of these two hypotheses was further elaborated upon by subsequent grammarians who added arguments for or against them.

¹⁴⁰ Author’s Note: It is often said that Arabic developed from Nabatean on the basis of inscriptions dating to the fourth century A.D. because, like Arabic, the Nabatean script is consonantic and is written from right to left. On the basis of Nabatean inscriptions, the language appears to have originated around the first and fourth centuries A.D. The majority of the inscriptions come from Petra in Jordan, Mada’in Salih in Saudi Arabia and from southern Syria, although some of them come from Rome where the Nabateans has established a commercial colony. Many of the inscriptions are from mortuaries. One funeral text dates from 328 A.D. and was found in Namara, Harran, and mentions “Imurulqais, son of Amru, the king of the Arabs.” Although the text employs Nabatean characters, the language is Arabic. Nabatean, as we know, is the formal form of Aramaic. Its variants employed various types of script: Hebrew, Palmyrene, Hatran, Mandaean, and Syriac. It is known that by the end of the eighth century B.C., the government officials of Judah spoke Aramaic (2 Kings 18:26 and Isaiah 36:11).

An analysis of the word “Hebrew,” for example, may lead to another conclusion regarding the age of the Arabic language. According to some Biblical scholars, the word Hebrew [*’ibri*], used by Abraham

hierarchies found in the Indo-European family is questionable. As the Dutch scholar Kees Versteegh cautions, “there is little basis for a genealogical classification of the kind current in Indo-European linguistics, and it may be preferable to stay within the bounds

[*Ibrahim*] and his descendants, is derived from Heber [‘*eber*], son of Shelah and grandson of Shem, ancestor of Abraham [*Ibrahim*], which means “one who immigrates” [*habiru*]. According to Max L. Margolis and Alexander Marx’s *Historia del pueblo judío*, the Hebrew term [‘*ibri*, *Ibrim*] may be a metathesis of ‘*arabi* [Arab] (vol. 24, serie 1945, I, 3-13) and is related with the Akkadian term *habiru* / ‘*apiru* which can be compared with the Ugaritic ‘*prm* and the Egyptian ‘*pr*. Both ‘*ibri* and ‘*eber*, as well as ‘*arabi*, designate the inhabitants of the desert, Semitic-speaking nomadic Bedouins, who were constantly traveling from place to place, a point also made by Osvald Loretz in “*Habiru / Hebräer: Eine sozio/linguistische Studie über die Herkunft des gentilicium ‘ibri vom appellativum habiru.*” If this is correct, Arabic is much older than philologists and linguists have speculated since their attempts to date the language is based on stone inscriptions dating back to the first century A.D.

By the Natufian period of the Mesolithic, approximately 10,000 years ago, nomadic people were already established in Palestine. These nomads clearly represented the prototype of the Oriental race which would give its traits to the present-day Semites. During the same pre-historic period, an indigenous Semitic population was also found in Mesopotamia. Furthermore, since antiquity, semi-nomadic Semites lived along the Syrian-Arabian desert which they took over as full nomads upon the domestication of the camel which took place around 1200 B.C.

The term Hebrew, which refers to the language in which the Old Testament was written, may be more sociological than ethnic or geographical. Ancient Hebrew was one of the Canaanite languages spoken in Palestine. It belongs to a group of flexive languages which span from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean, from the foothills of Armenia to the southern coast of Arabia. Hebrew belongs to the Semitic family of languages, a term coined by A.L. Schölzer in 1781. In present times, the classification of Semitic languages is object of debate. Despite their own individual characteristics, Semitic languages are closely related, so much so that, even though written records do not contain vowels, it is relatively easy to point out common linguistic traits.

According to both Hebraists and Arabists, the Arabic language has preserved many of the original phonetic elements of ancient Semitic and expresses the essence of the language spoken by the early inhabitants of the desert. It is for this reason that Arabic grammarians have referred to Arabic as the “mother of all languages.” It should be pointed out, however, that when Muslim Arabists use the hyperbole “mother of all languages,” they are speaking specifically about the Semitic languages and not in a lexicogenetic sense. They are not claiming that Arabic is the mother of all languages nor that Arabic is the mother of all Semitic languages. On the contrary, it is well known since the time of Sibawayhi that Arabic was formed on the basis of pre-existing dialects. The expression “mother of all languages” should be understood in the sense that without Arabic, which has preserved some of the most ancient features of ancient Semitic, it would be difficult to understand other Semitic languages with any depth, a fact readily acknowledged by Hebraists and Arabists.

Attempts to establish links between the different Semitic languages, without considering Arabic, have faced insurmountable obstacles. No Proto-Semitic can be constructed without due consideration of the Arabic language. The difficulty of reconstructing ancient Semitic is accentuated by the fact that the Semites, like other ethnic and linguistic groups, never had a common colloquial. On the contrary, as the earliest Arabic grammarians observed, the Semites spoke various dialects belonging to a common family. Although there was never a universal, national or standard Arabic in pre-Islamic times, Arabic remains an essential element when it comes to understanding and reconstructing ancient Semitic. As is well known, Arabic has been particularly important in the understanding of Hebrew grammar (see A.H. Mutlaq’s *al-Harakat al-lughawiyyah fi al-Andalus*.)

The pre-Islamic literary corpus, which dates between the sixth and eighth centuries A.D., and which was compiled by Arab philologists during the eighth and ninth centuries, demonstrates that classical Arabic was not a uniform language. Arabic linguists, like Sibawayhi (d. 8th c.), spoke of the existence of diverse dialects which were later divided by experts in Semitic philology into the Western zone of the Hijaz and the Eastern zone of Tamin and other Bedouin tribes, an indication that the language is much older than assumed.

of a descriptive and typological analysis of the relationships between Arabic and its Semitic neighbors” (21). The claim that Arabic is the youngest of the Semitic languages is clearly erroneous as it is based on the recency of the Namara stone which preserves the earliest example of written Arabic. As Yasir Suleiman explains, “Tying the age of a language to the date of its first written records is based on an untenable premise that ties language to writing” (2006). If it was confirmed that ancient Arabic was the common ancestor of the Central Semitic languages, namely, the old Arabian languages, and the northern Semitic languages like Ugaritic, Canaanite, Phoenician, Aramaic, and Hebrew, then *Allah* may indeed be related to the Hebrew *Eloh* and the Aramaic *Alaha*, not in that it was borrowed from those languages, but in that it was borrowed by them. If *Eloh* and *Alaha* were not borrowed from *Allah*, they are surely related, sharing a common origin, which the Arabic language may have retained as it contains some of the most ancient and archaic features of the Semitic languages. In fact, comparative Semitic grammars, like those of John Huehnergard and Patrick Bennet, suggest that the linguistic, grammatical, and syntactic paradigms are virtually always in favor of reconstructing Proto-Semitic using the Arabic paradigms. According to Michael Carasik, this is largely because Arabic has preserved many more consonants than the other Semitic languages, except for Ugaritic, which was not known until seventy-five years ago. As he explains, “Even if Arabic were the closest of the Semitic languages we know today to Proto-Semitic, this would still not make it the language from which the other Semitic languages derived.”

Regardless of the outcome of the debate surrounding the origin of the divine name, one thing is for certain, *Allah* is not a modified version of the pagan goddess *al-Lat*. This latter claim, made by Muhammad’s heathen adversaries, and reiterated by fundamentalist Christians in contemporary times, attempts to link the word *Lat* to the word *Allah*, ‘*Uzza* to ‘*Aziz*, and *Manat* to *al-Mannan*: *Lat*, ‘*Uzza* and *Manat* were idols whereas *al-‘Aziz* [The Most Powerful] and *al-Mannan* [The Generous] were epithets of *Allah*¹⁴¹. The following verse was revealed in relation to this claim: “The most beautiful names belong to Allah: so call upon Him by them; but shun such men as desecrate His Names: for what they do, they will soon be requited” (7:180). As Razi (d. 1210) and Abu Hashim al-Jubba’i (d. 933) explained, the word *Allah* is compounded of the definite article *al* and *ilah*, which means “god” or “deity.”¹⁴² This etymology is consistent with Imam Ja’far al-

¹⁴¹ Furthermore, such Arabian gods were exported widely to Mesopotamia; cf. Drijvers, H. J. W. *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa* (Leiden, the Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1980), 146-74.

Sadiq's explanation found in *al-Kafi*: "the word *Allah* derives from *ilah*" (Kulayni 286).

The question arises as to whether it is appropriate to translate the Arabic term *Allah* as *God*. There are many Western Muslims who, due to the lack of a better translation, accept it and speak about God, when in reality they are thinking about Allah. Although the Arabic term *Allah* is often translated as "God," it is merely a question of convention or concession, because it is improper and inadequate to translate the term in this sense because Allah is not an *ilah* [god]. For the Arabs from the Days of Ignorance [*al-jahiliyyah*], the *alihah* [plural of *ilah*] were the gods they adored: man-made idols and sacred objects which the expression *la ilaha illa Allah* [there is no God but Allah] denounced as unworthy of worship. It may be more accurate, instead, to translate the name *Allah* as "the Divine" because Allah is not only the most exalted name of the Reality or Supreme Truth, but also the principle of divine unity as we see in Surat al-Ikhlāṣ: "Say: He is Allah, the One." The principle of divine unity [*al-tawḥid*] consists in worshipping no other deity but the Divine as expressed in the first formula of the *shahadah*, the profession of unity [*kalimat al-tawḥid*]: *la ilaha illa Allah* [there is no god but the Divine]. Although the Indo-European *God*, *Bog*, *Baga*, *Deus* and *Theos* are the closest translations to the Arabic *Allah*, their polytheistic philosophical encumbrances make them inadequate.¹⁴³ For example, in English, with a change in capitalization only, god to God, the believer can segue from polytheism to monotheism. This is not to say that Allah is not God and God is not Allah. Allah is God, the same Judeo-Christian-Islamic God, the God of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad, and not another divinity. For many Muslims, however, the minor variant between god and God does not offer sufficient distinction for One and Only God who is All-Powerful, All-Seeing, All-Knowing and Omnipresent. Even the Hebrew *Eloh* cannot serve as a cognate for *Allah* as it can be made masculine, feminine, singular, and plural. The only equivalents for *Allah* come from Semitic languages and would include the Hebrew *YHWH* and the Aramaic *Alah*. As the One, the Unique, the Genderless and the Indivisible, Allah is not a "god." He is *Allah*, *al-Ilah*, the Divine, *par excellence*, the essence of all the divine attributes.

3. The Ninety-Nine Most Beautiful Names

¹⁴² For Abu 'Ali al-Jubba'i (d. 915), see Jabbar's *al-mughni* (250, II, 21 ss and 253, I, 4) and for his son, Abu Hashim al-Jubba'i (d. 933), in the same book (251, I, 3 and 252, I, 8). For more on the historical development of Arabic grammar, see *Studies in the Grammar of Early Arabic Based on Papyri Datable to before A.H. 300/A.D. 912* by Hopkins

¹⁴³ Nonetheless, all these pagan embodiments were leveled into one God, as such this "inadequacy" seems inevitable.

In a *ḥadīth* [tradition] transmitted by Abu Hurayra (d. 677) in Sunni sources, and Imam ‘Ali (d. 661) in Shi‘ite sources, the Prophet Muḥammad taught that “Allah has ninety-nine names.”¹⁴⁴ The most beautiful names generally include:

1. *Allah*
2. *al-Raḥman*: The All Beneficent
3. *al-Raḥim*: The Most Merciful
4. *al-Malik*: The King, The Sovereign
5. *al-Quddus*: The Most Holy
6. *al-Salam*: The Peace
7. *al-Mu‘min*: The Guarantor
8. *al-Muḥaymin*: The Guardian, The Preserver
9. *al-‘Aziz*: The Almighty, the Self-Sufficient
10. *al-Jabbar*: The Powerful, the Irresistible
11. *al-Mutakabbir*: The Tremendous
12. *al-Khaliq*: The Creator
13. *al-Bari’*: The Maker
14. *al-Muṣawwir*: The Fashioner of Forms
15. *al-Ghaḥḥar*: The Ever Forgiving
16. *al-Qaḥḥar*: The All-Compelling Subduer
17. *al-Waḥḥab*: The Bestower
18. *al-Razzaq*: The Ever Providing
19. *al-Fattaḥ*: The Victory Giver
20. *al-‘Alim*: The All-Knowing, the Omniscient
21. *al-Qabīḍ*: The Restrainer, the Straightener
22. *al-Basit*: The Expander, the Munificent
23. *al-Khaḥḥīḍ*: the Abaser
24. *al-Raḥī’*: the Exalter

¹⁴⁴ In Sunni sources, this tradition is found in Bukhari (d. 870), Muslim (d. 875), Tirmidhi (d. 892), Ibn Majah (d. 887), and Hakim (d. 1014). In Sufi sources, it is found in Ibn ‘Ata’Allah’s (d. 1309) *al-Qaṣd al-mujarrad* (2) and Ghazali’s (d. 1111) *al-maqsīd al-asma’* (26-27). It is also found in the following Shi‘ite sources: Mufid’s (d. 1022) *Awa‘ilu al-maqalat fi al-madhahib wa al-mujtarat*, Tabriz, Fadlullah Zanjani, 1371: preface; Shaykh al-Sadduq’s (d. 991-92) *al-tawḥīd* (35; 58-59; 86), and in al-Ṭusi’s (d. 1067?) *al-Tibyan fi tafsir al-Qur‘an*, among many others. Some of these traditions include a list of names which, according to *ḥadīth* scholars, is considered a post-prophetic addition, although the ninety-nine names themselves are authentic as they are derived from the Qur‘an. The initial form of the saying, without the divine names, is considered authentic. For an overview *ḥadīth* literature and science, see ‘Abd al-Ra‘uf’s “*Hadīth Literature: The Development of the Science of Hadīth*” in Beeston’s *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period* (271-88).

25. *al-Mu‘izz*: the Giver of Honor
26. *al-Mudhill*: the Giver of Dishonor
27. *al-Sami‘*: the All-Hearing
28. *al-Baṣir*: the All-Seeing
29. *al-Ḥakam*: the Judge, the Arbitrator
30. *al-‘Adl*: the Utterly Just
31. *al-Latif*: The Subtly Kind
32. *al-Khabir*: the All-Aware
33. *al-Ḥalim*: the Forbearing, the Indulgent
34. *al-‘Azim*: the Magnificent, the Infinite
35. *al-Ghafur*: the All-Forgiving
36. *al-Shakur*: The Grateful
37. *al-‘Aliyy*: the Sublimely Exalted
38. *al-Kabir*: the Great
39. *al-Ḥafiz*: the Preserver
40. *al-Muqit*: the Nourisher
41. *al-Ḥasib*: the Reckoner
42. *al-Jalil*: the Majestic
43. *al-Karim*: the Bountiful, the Generous
44. *al-Raqib*: the Watchful
45. *al-Mujib*: the Responsive, the Answerer
46. *al-Wasi‘*: the Vast, the All-Encompassing
47. *al-Ḥakim*: the Wise
48. *al-Wadud*: the Loving, the Kind One
49. *al-Majid*: the All-Glorious
50. *al-Ba‘ith*: the Raiser of the Dead
51. *al-Shahid*: the Witness
52. *al-Ḥaqq*: the Truth, the Real
53. *al-Wakil*: the Trustee, the Dependable
54. *al-Qawiyy*: the Strong
55. *al-Matin*: the Firm, the Steadfast
56. *al-Waliyy*: the Protecting Friend, Patron, and Helper
57. *al-Ḥamid*: the All-Praiseworthy
58. *al-Muḥṣi*: the Accounter, the Numberer of All

59. *al-Mubdi'*: the Producer, Originator, and Initiator of All
60. *al-Mu'id*: The Reinstator Who Brings Back All
61. *al-Muhyi*: the Giver of Life
62. *al-Mumit*: the Bringer of Death, the Destroyer
63. *al-Hayy*: the Ever-Living
64. *al-Qayyum*: the Self-Subsisting Sustainer of All
65. *al-Wajid*: the Perceiver, the Finder, the Unfailing
66. *al-Majid*: the Illustrious, the Magnificent
67. *al-Wahid*: The One, the All-Inclusive, the Indivisible
68. *al-Samad*: the Self-Sufficient, the Impregnable, the Eternally Besought of All, the Everlasting
69. *al-Qadir*: the All-Able
70. *al-Muqtadir*: the All-Determiner, the Dominant
71. *al-Muqaddim*: the Expediter, He who brings forward
72. *al-Mu'akkhkir*: the Delayer, He who puts far away
73. *al-Awwal*: the First
74. *al-Akhir*: the Last
75. *al-Zahir*: the Manifest, the All-Victorious
76. *al-Batin*: the Hidden, the All-Emcompassing
77. *al-Wali*: the Patron
78. *al-Muta'ali*: the Self-Exalted
79. *al-Barr*: the Most Kind and Righteous
80. *al-Tawwab*: the Ever Returning, Ever Relenting
81. *al-Muntaqim*: the Avenger
82. *al-'Afuww*: the Pardoner, the Effacer of Sins
83. *al-Ra'uf*: the Compassionate, the All-Pitying
84. *Malik al-Mulk*: the Owner of All-Sovereignty
85. *Dhu al-Jalal wa al-Ikram*: the Lord of Majesty and Generosity
86. *al-Muqsit*: the Equitable, the Requirer
87. *al-Jami'*: the Gatherer, the Unifier
88. *al-Ghaniyy*: the All-Rich, the Independent
89. *al-Mughni*: the Enricher, the Emancipator
90. *al-Mani'*: the Withholder, the Shielder, the Defender
91. *al-Darr*: the Distressor, the Harmer [from *ḥadith*]

- 92. *al-Naḥḥ*: the Propitious, the Benefactor
- 93. *al-Nur*: the Light
- 94. *al-Hadi*: the Guide
- 95. *al-Badi*: the Incomparable, the Originator
- 96. *al-Baqi*: the Ever-Enduring and Immutable
- 97. *al-Warith*: the Heir, the Inheritor of All
- 98. *al-Rashid*: the Guide, the Infallible Teacher, and Knower
- 99. *al-Sabur*: the Patient, the Timeless

The name Allah is the first and foremost of the ninety-nine most beautiful names. According to Ibn al-‘Arabi (d. 1240), Allah is a proper noun, which can qualify [*al-nu‘ut*] but can never be qualified, as it refers to the One God (Beneito 29). Not only does the name Allah refer to the Divine, it is the universal synthesis of the divine names [*majmu‘ al-ṣifāt al-ilahiyyah*] because it represents the Essence which embraces all attributes [*al-dhat al-jami‘ah*] (29-30). In his *Tafsir al-Qur‘an al-Karim*, Ibn al-‘Arabi explains that Allah is the name of the Divine Essence [*al-dhat al-ilahiyyah*] (7). As it is the proper name of the Divinity, the symbol of the Divine Essence, and the embodiment of all the attributes, it comes as no surprise that Allah is the most commonly invoked of the ninety-nine names. When people invoke Allah, however, they are not necessarily invoking the Essence, but rather, a specific attribute. As Ibn al-‘Arabi explains, since the name Allah contains every divine name, it takes, on behalf of what it names, the place of every name of God (2002: 60):

So when someone says “Oh Allah,” look at the state which incited him to make this call and consider which divine name is specifically connected to that state. That specific name [*al-ism al-khaṣṣ*] is what the caller is calling with his words, “Oh Allah.” For the name Allah, by its original coinage, names the Essence of God Itself, “in whose hand is the dominion of everything” (36:83). That is why the name which refers specifically to the Essence takes the place of every divine name. (60)

Likewise, if a believer who is in need of provision says “Oh Allah, provide for me!,” while Allah is also the Preventer [*al-manī*], he does not seek through his state anything but the Name ‘Provider’ [*al-razzaq*]. So, in meaning, he has only said “Oh Provider, provide for me” (247-48).

The ninety-nine names of Allah represent divine attributes and qualities. As numerous scholars have observed, the ninety-names can be viewed as the Essence of

Allah, Islam, and the Qur'an. Sir Edwin Arnold observes that "almost every religious idea of the Koran comes up in the long catalogue of attributes" (v). Böwering notes that the ninety-nine names are a major stylistic element in the Qur'an, representing "a cherished summary of the holy book, and a simple epitome of the theological core of Islam since early times" (248). And, finally, Purificación de la Torre points out that "La trascendencia de los nombres de Dios en el Islam y su significación no encuentra paralelismo alguno en ninguna otra religión" (13) [The transcendental nature of the names of God in Islam, as well as their meaning, finds no parallel whatsoever in any other religion].¹⁴⁵ Indeed, as Böwering has remarked, the most beautiful names of Allah "mark Islam against its sibling religions, Judaism and Christianity, which except for cabalistic and mystical uses, did not develop a systematic theology on the basis of the divine names (Pseudo-Dionysius notwithstanding)" (248). Each divine name is a hermeneutical heaven, a drop containing an ocean. The ninety-nine most beautiful names represent core theological concepts which are conveyed through the colloquial by means of the Allah Lexicon.

Conscious of the power of language, the Prophet assured that whoever learns the divine names, understands them, and enumerates them [*iḥṣa'*] will enter paradise, finding eternal salvation (Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, and Ḥakim). Evidently, this does not imply that the divine attributes are numerical entities or that Allah possesses only ninety-nine names. To enumerate the names means to invoke them in *dhikr Allah* or remembrance of Allah which takes on many levels in the social and spiritual realms.

As Arabic has ninety-nine names for the One God, anyone of which is theoretically likely to be used in the oath construct, Arabic speakers frequently swear by them (Saliḥ 18). As Maḥmūd al-Khatib has shown, the direct or indirect invocation of Allah, by means of the Qur'an and Sunnah, serves three important functions:

First, they can be used as a supportive device [unquestionable evidence given by God and His Prophet] for supporting a particular view. In this way they form an integral part of argument. Second, the Qur'anic verses and the Traditions are, like much emotive language, strongly rhythmic, thereby they evoke feelings. Third, they help the user [the persuader] to gain a kind of trustworthiness and to be viewed by the audience as being reliable and dependable (170).

This form of *dhikr* or remembrance of Allah serves a concrete social function in the

¹⁴⁵ It should be noted that Mazdaism has a tradition of one hundred names for God. So, the uniqueness of Islam is not that it has ninety-nine names for God, but that it has developed an entire theology around them.

language of persuasion. It also acts as a constant reminder of the omnipresence and omniscience of the Divine who supervises all social interaction.

In the spiritual sphere, *dhikr* or remembrance of Allah has a strong psychological effect. As William Chittick explains in his introduction to *al-Sahifah al-sajjadiyyah*,

From earliest times the sources confirm the power of *dhikr* to provide for human psychological and spiritual needs and to influence activity. It is not difficult to understand that reciting *ya Raḥman, ya Raḥim* [O All-Merciful, O All-Compassionate] will have different effects upon the believer than reciting, *la ḥawla wa la quwwata illa billah al-‘aliyy al-‘aẓim* [There is no power and no strength save in God, the All-High, the All-Mighty]. Spiritual teachers eventually developed a science of different *adhkar* [plural of *dhikr*] appropriate for all the states of the soul. (xxiii-xxiv)

The more pious Muslims are, the more they seek to savor the divine names in search of spiritual elevation, seeking redemption through remembrance. It is through the invocation of Allah [*bi dhikr Allah*] that they detach themselves from worldly ties and thought to unite with the Divine Presence (Ruspoli 91). This process is known as annihilation through the remembrance of Allah [*fana’ ‘an dhikr*] (Massignon 65). Muslim mystics mention the divine names perpetually, in public, in private, openly and inwardly, verbally and mentally, in search of spiritual elevation, reciting them ritually after the daily prayers, and as a constant mantra in the back of their minds. They are witnesses and those who witness the Oneness of God to God and to the people through mention of His names. They are the *dhakirun*, those who remember, and who are sought out by angels “who travel around the roads seeking out the people of *dhikr*” (Bukhari, Muslim, Aḥmad). They are those who truly remember Allah. As Pablo Beneito explains,

el *dhikr* no consiste en una repetición mecánica. Se trata de una rememoración conciente en la cual, a cada nuevo aliento, el sentido, la experiencia, el “sabor” y el “saber” de cada nombre, son incesantemente renovados en la vivencia del contemplativo gracias a la ilimitada creatividad divina. (ix)

[*dhikr* does not consist in mechanical repetition. It is a conscious act of remembrance in which, with every new breath, the meaning, the experience, the “flavor” and the “knowledge” of each name are incessantly renewed in the personal experience the contemplator thanks to unlimited divine creativity]

The omnipresence of Allah in everyday Arabic speech represents the depth and breadth of the Allah Lexicon, an ocean of theocentric expressions. The oceanic peaks, waves, and

froth, represent the spiritual surges of the Allah Lexicon, rising above the rest.

While Muslims are encouraged to memorize the ninety-nine names for their own benefit, learning the names by heart is not the objective: “The aim is to find the One who is named” (9). As David Burrell and Nazih Daher explain, “reciting the divine names allows us to bring God into our ambit...However, since the names are more than attributes, because Allah uses them to reveal Himself, saves our recitation from reducing God to our experience” (vii). Naming God, according to Purificación de la Torre, is to know God, which is why, for the Sufis, the divine names are a path leading to the Divine (13-14). In other words, the multifarious manifestations of Allah in Arabic speech are an attempt to access the Divine through various verbal channels.

Besides the list of ninety-nine names, there are additional names attributed to Allah in the Qur’an, countless others which are known only to Him, and others which He has revealed to His angels, prophets and messengers. According to an Islamic tradition passed down through both academic and spiritual circles, Allah has four thousand names or attributes: one thousand of these names are known only to Allah; one thousand are known only by Allah and His angels [*mala’ikah*], and another one thousand are known by Allah, His angels, His prophets and the believers; of the last one thousand, three hundred are mentioned in the Torah, three hundred in the Psalms, three hundred in the Gospel [*Injil*], and one hundred in *al-Qur’an al-Karim* [the Noble Qur’an]. One, the name of His Essence, He has kept for Himself and hidden in the Qur’an (al-Halveti 3). In order to embrace all of the divine names at once, the Prophet used to pray “O Allah, I invoke you with all your beautiful names” (Ibn Majah, Imam Malik). By “all of the divine names,” we do not mean the ninety-nine names of Allah, but all the names of Allah, known and unknown, as the Prophet Muḥammad was granted “the all-comprehensive Words” [*jawami’ al-kalam*] (Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi). According to Friedlander, the search for the hidden name motivates people to read the Qur’an in its entirety (9). While this may indeed be the case, the search for the supreme name, the answers to all one’s prayers, must equally motivate Muslims to invoke the ninety-nine most beautiful names, as opposed to one in particular.¹⁴⁶ The ninety-nine most beautiful names, *al-asma’ al-ḥusna*, are divided into various categories, names of essence and names of quality, as well as relational and non-relational attributes (Ghazali, 1999: 15).

¹⁴⁶ Jewish people typically address God as Elohim or Adonai. Christians normally employ God, Jesus or Lord. Muslims, however, employ Allah and His Attributes, allowing for more precision in one’s prayers. For example, if one is seeking mercy, one may appeal to *al-Rahim*. If one is seeking justice, one may invoke *al-Muntaqim*, the Avenger. If one is in need of divine love, one may invoke the Loving.

Theologians, both Sunni and Shi'ite, organized the ninety-nine names of Allah into positive [*tashbih*] and negative [*tanzih*] attributes, demonstrating a divine duality within the divine unity, the harmony between two opposites.¹⁴⁷ According to Twelver Shi'ite theologians, the *ṣifat thubutiyyah* or positive attributes are those which are befitting Allah. The attributes are not acquired, but inherent in the Divine. Although they are many in number, the following eight are usually mentioned. They are:

1. *Qadim*: It means that Allah is Eternal. He has neither beginning nor end. Nothing except Allah is eternal.
2. *Qadir*: It means that Allah is Omnipotent. He has power over everything and every affair.
3. *‘Alim*: It means that Allah is Omniscient. He knows everything. Even our unspoken intentions and desires are not hidden from Him.
4. *Ḥayy*: It means that Allah was always alive, and will remain alive forever.
5. *Murid*: It means that Allah has His own will and discretion in all affairs. He does not do anything under compulsion.
6. *Mudrik*: It means that He is All-Perceiving, *al-Sami‘* [All-Hearing], *Baṣir* [All-Seeing]. Allah sees and hears everything without any need of eyes or ears.
7. *Mutakallim*: It means Allah is the master of the word. He can create speech in anything, as He did in a tree for Moses and in the “curtain of light” for the Prophet Muḥammad.
8. *Sadiq*: It means Allah is true in His words and promises.

The *ṣifat salbiyyah* or negative attributes are those which cannot be found in Allah as they are below His dignity. While they are many, the eight most important ones are normally listed. They include:

1. *Sharik*: The word *sharik* means a colleague or partner. Allah has neither a

¹⁴⁷ For an excellent exposition of Divine Duality, the yin and yang in Islam, refer to Murata's *The Tao of Islam*, particularly chapter two. Netton, however, does not seem to grasp this notion. In *Allah Transcendent*, he writes that:

The attributes of the Farabian God in this book [*The Virtuous City*] are treated in two different ways: negatively and positively. In the first the author attempted to stress the utter transcendence of his God, referring to Him through a variety of negative propositions and statements... In the second mode al-Farabi emphasized among other things the different facets of perfection of the Deity, while underlining the fact that all His attributes were subsumed in, and not distinct from, His essence (104).

While the author is correct up to this point, he erroneously concludes that, “Taken together, the negative and positive descriptions of the attributes of God in al-Farabi's work constitute a radical departure in Islamic thought” (104) when this divine duality is fundamental in both Sufism and Shi'ism. Among the Shi'ah, for example, the positive and negative attributes of Allah are taught to children in the most elementary books on religion.

colleague not a partner in His Divinity.

2. *Murakkab*: This world means “compound” or “mixed.” Allah is neither made, nor composed of any material. He cannot be divided even in imagination.

3. *Makan*: It means “place” Allah is not in a place because He has no body, and He is everywhere because his power and knowledge is magnificently apparent everywhere.

4. *Hulul*: It means “entering.” Nothing enters into Allah nor does He enter into anything or anybody. Therefore, the belief of incarnation in any form is abhorrent to the conception of Divinity.

5. *Maḥal al-taghayyur*: This means “subject to change.” Allah cannot change.

6. *Mar’i*: It means “visible.” Allah is not visible. He has not been seen, is not seen, and will never be seen.

7. *Ihtiyaj*: It means “dependence” or “need.” Allah is not deficient in any virtue, so He does not need anything. He is All-Perfect.

8. *Sifat za’idah*: This means “added qualifications.” The attributes of Allah are not separate from His Being. When we say that Allah is Omnipotent and Merciful, we do not mean that His Power and Mercy are something different from His Person. We see that a child is born without any power, and then he acquires strength day by day. It is so because power is not his person. God is not like this. He is Power Himself; Mercy Himself; Knowledge Himself; Justice Himself; Virtue Himself; Truth Himself and so on. (Rizvi)

This approach of focusing on what Allah was not, as opposed to what He is, may have appealed to jurists and theologians; however, it was criticized by the followers of the intellectual and spiritual tradition. As Ibn al-‘Arabi explains in *al-Futuḥat al-Makkiyyah*: “The God of the rationalists is a God that nobody could ever love since he was too remote and incomprehensible” (2: 326).

Unlike the theologians who preferred to view Allah in abstract terms, the Gnostics [*‘arifun*] attempted to make Allah accessible, dividing the most beautiful names into names of power and majesty, which invoke the immanent and transcendent aspect of the Divine, and names of beauty, which invoke the loving and merciful side of the Divine.

The names of majesty and power [*asma’ al-jalal*] include *al-Malik* [the Sovereign, the Owner]; *al-Akbar* [the Greatest]; *al-Fattah* [the Revealer or the Opener]; *al-‘Azim* [the Infinite]; *al-Qahhar* [the Compeller]; *al-Kabir* [the Glorious]; *al-Muqit* [the

Omnipresent]; *al-Qadir* [the All-Powerful]; *al-Muqtadir* [the Potent]; *al-Ghaniyy* [the Opulent]; *al-A'la* [the Supreme]; *al-'Aliyy* [the Highest]; *al-Qayyum* [the Self-Sufficient]; *al-Samad* [the Absolute]; *al-Muta'ali* [the Most Exalted]; *al-Qawiyy* [the Strongest]; *al-Matin* [the Unbreakable]; *al-Akram* [the Most Noble]; *al-Muhaymin* [the Guardian, the Protector]; *al-Majid* [the Most Glorious]; *al-Hamid* [The Praised]; *al-Mumit* [the Giver of Death]; *al-Muḥit* [The All-Pervasive]; *al-Kafi* [The Sufficient]; *al-Ghalib* [the Victorious]; *al-Baqi* [the Living]; all of them referring to His complete authority over creation and underlining his power [*al-jalal*], which is why they are mainly masculine.

The names of beauty [*asma' al-jamal*] include *al-Raḥman* [the Most Compassionate]; *al-Raḥim* [the Most Merciful]; *al-Salam* [the Peace]; *al-Mu'min* [the Guardian of Faith]; *al-Khaliq* [The Creator]; *al-Ghaffar* [the Forgiver]; *al-Ghafur* [the All-Forgiving]; *al-Wahhab* [the Giver of All]; *al-Razzaq* [the Provider]; *al-Shakur* [the Rewarder of Thankfulness]; *al-Karim* [the Most Generous]; *al-Qarib* [the Close]; *al-Barr* [the Benefactor]; *al-Ra'uf* [the Clement]; *al-Tawwab* [the Most Forgiving]; *al-Wadud* [The Most Loving]; *al-'Afuww* [the Forgiver]; *al-Shakir* [the Thankful]; *al-Mawla* [The Master or the Protector]; *al-Kafil* [The Most Responsible]; *al-Ghafir* [the Indulgent]; *al-Hadi'* [the Guide]; *al-Nasir* [the Defender]; *al-Rabb* [the Lord]; *al-Ḥafiyy* [the Humiliator]; *al-Mannan* [the Preventor of Harm]; all referring to feminine attributes such as tenderness, protection, acceptance, forgiveness, receptivity, gentleness, and so forth.

The names of majesty and power are invoked by those who are meek and seek strength from God Almighty, the slaves [*'ibad*] of Allah, those who worship Allah out of fear of the fire. As for the names of beauty, they are invoked by those who seek mercy and forgiveness, by the servants [*'ibad*] of Allah, those who worship God Almighty out of a desire for the garden. The highest level of faith, however, is found among the Sufis, who worship Allah, not out of fear of hell or a desire for paradise, but out of pure unconditional love.

Besides questions of categorization, the ninety-nine names of Allah were treated differently by various philosophical schools. On the one hand, we find those who deny their appropriateness, feeling that the multiplicity of attributes undermined divine simplicity (Burrell and Daher 185). This includes the Mu'tazilite who hypostatize the attributes, and so reduplicate the consideration of God via His attributes (192). Ibn Ṭufayl, who was influenced by Mu'tazilite thought, insisted that diversity was non-existent in Allah's nature (Hawi 64). On the other hand, we find those who take descriptive Qur'anic texts at face value, embracing *tashbih* or anthropomorphism (Burrell

and Daher 185). These include the Ash'aris, the Wahhabis, and the Salafis. Since one may deny the reality of attributes in divinity without calling their appropriateness into question, a range of intermediate positions can be found among modern religious thinkers of Islam (185). While these debates may have had relevance in intellectual circles, they never appealed to the masses, who embraced the attributes of Allah as means to approach His Oneness. As F.E. Peters has noted,

Although Muslims no longer argue the question of the relationship between Allah's essence and attributes...the devotion to the 'beautiful names of God' still has an important place in Islamic devotion, and the Muslims' primary virtue is *tawakkul* [total trust and reliance on God]. (79)

In other words, the debate has subsided, but the devotion to the Divine, by means of the most beautiful names continues.

Another controversial issue among Muslim philosophers was whether the divine names actually represented Allah and, if so, whether they were eternal. This issue revolves around the dialectic about whether the Qur'an is created or uncreated and the origin of language (De la Torre 24). The Mu'tazilis argued that if languages were created, then the Qur'an and the divine names were also created (24). In their view, language was based on human convention [*muwada'ah*] and reasoning [*'aql*]. Faced with this doctrine, the Ash'aris argued in favor of the eternity of the Qur'an (24), holding that language was the product of divine instruction [*tawqif*] and revelation [*sam'*]. Eventually, the attitude of *bi-la kayfa* came to predominate among the Sunnis, with philosophers like Ibn Khaldun choosing to suspend reason, concluding that "The intellect should not be used to weigh such matters as...the real character of divine attributes" for "it cannot comprehend God and His attributes" (Wolfson 589). The Muslim mystics, however, had another approach, differentiating between the signifier and the signified, distinguishing between the divine names and the Divine Reality. As Beneito explains,

El nombre es lo Nombrado si por nombres se entienden los Nombres primordiales; mas no es lo Nombrado si por nombres se entienden los nombres de los Nombres-es decir, los nombres de aquellos Nombres primordiales-, que son los nombres generalmente conocidos, compuestos de letras y sonidos. (xv)

[The name is the Named if by names we mean the Primordial Names. However, the name is not the Named if by names we mean the names of the Names, namely, the names of those Primordial Names which are those which are generally known and which are comprised of letters and sounds.]

The divine names that we know, the ones we have in writing, are not really the names of the Names. Everything which exists in symbols or signs is merely references to the Real Names, and indication of the Primordial Divine Word (278). Or, in the words of Ibn al-‘Arabi (d. 1240), as found in volume two of *al-Futuḥat al-Makkiyyah*, “The names are for definition [*al-ta‘rif*] and specification [*al-tamyiz*]. They are a gate to which only God has access for only God knows God” (69). Hence, the names which appear in the Qur’an apply to that which is “other than Allah.¹⁴⁸” This is why the Sufis say that it is the tongue that mentions Allah, but it is only the heart that understands it (Friedlander 15). Since Allah represents the Divine Essence and the Divine Essence is utterly incomprehensible, “The God of Islam remains hidden beneath an accumulation of beautiful names” (Böwering 249). To be precise, it is the Essence of Allah which is occulted, but His Reality is manifested.¹⁴⁹

Another contentious issue among Muslim philosophers is whether the ninety-names of Allah are equal or whether they form a hierarchy. According to the *ḥanafī* thought, all of the divine names are equal: whoever uses one of them is invoking Allah (De la Torre 22). According to *ash‘arī* thought, a certain hierarchy exists in which the name Allah is above them all (22). This is the same idea found among the Sufis. As Ghazali (d. 1111) explains in *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God*, “You should know that this name is the greatest of the ninety-nine names of God--great and glorious--because it refers to the Essence which unites all the attributes of divinity” (51). Or, as Ibn al-‘Arabi (d. 1240), states “The omnicomprehensive name *Allah* relates to the Essence. It embraces all of the divine names. It is a totalizing term, the ‘synonym’ of every divine name, in that they relate to the Essence and not in the sense that they are distinct names” (33). It is among this latter group, those who uphold the hierarchy of the divine names, that we find the belief in the supreme name [*al-ism al-a‘zam*] of Allah, occult and unrevealed.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ According to *‘ilm al-huruf* or the “science of letters,” words are not identical with the idea of things (Dévényi 277).

¹⁴⁹ In fact, Islam forbids focusing on the Essence. As the Prophet said: “Meditate upon all things, but do not meditate on the Essence of Allah” (Suyuti). This saying was echoed by Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (d. 731-32) who said: “Do not talk about the Allah Himself, since the discussion of Allah increased nothing except the discussor’s own intellectual perplexity” (Kulayni 235). In another tradition, the Imam said: “Talk about every thing but never talk about the Essence [*dhat*] of Allah” (236). Certainly the hiddenness of God is extremely Semitic, and is very much alive in Judaism and Eastern Christian circles as well.

¹⁵⁰ The supreme name of Allah was known to Imam ‘Ali (d. 661) (Friedlander 8). This is confirmed in Sunni, Shi‘ite and Sufi sources. To cite a single example, Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq (d. 765-66) said: “I have [knowledge] of the [greatest] name [of Allah] which when the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and

The idea of a mysterious supreme name [*al-ism al-a'zam*], which assures the fulfillment of one's prayers, is very widespread among both Sunnis and Shi'ites. The Prophet Muḥammad explained that the supreme name is the one "by which if He is called upon, He responds; and if He is asked, He grants" (Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, and Ibn Majah). While the notion of the supreme name is based on some *aḥadith* [traditions], it also derives from an interpretation of the Qur'anic verse *fa sabbiḥ bismi rabbika al-ʿazīmi*, which can be translated in one of two ways: "Then celebrate with praises the name of thy Lord, the Supreme!" (56:74; 56:96; 69:52) or "Then celebrate with praises the supreme name of your Lord" (56:74; 56:96; 69:52). Yusuf 'Ali translates the verse the first way and Muḥammad Aṣad follows the sense of the second, translating it as "Extol, then, the limitless glory of thy Sustainer's mighty name!" (56:74; 56:96; 69:52). While some scholars deny that the verse can be interpreted in this way, others hold that the adjective "supreme" [*ʿazīm*] qualifies the noun "Lord."

Although the existence of a supreme name is not corroborated by the traditions compiled by Bukhari (d. 870) or Muslim (d. 875), it is found in the equally meticulous collections of *ḥadith* prepared by Abu Dawud (d. 817) and Tirmidhi (d. 892), where the Prophet speaks of the supreme name, without designating it explicitly. In the *aḥadith* [traditions] in question, the Prophet Muḥammad limits himself to leaving clues regarding the supreme name. He contents himself with saying that the supreme name is to be found in a series of words or expressions, leaving Muslims to attempt to decipher it on their own. For many Muslims, the secret of the sublime name is to be found in the ninety-nine names of Allah.

According to Ṭabari (d. 923), Imam Malik (d. 795), Ibn Ḥibban, al-Ash'ari (d. 935?), and al-Baqillani (d. 1013), who are representatives of the intellectual tradition, and al-Junayd and Abu Yazid al-Bistami, who are representative of the spiritual tradition, the supreme name does not have a determined form per se.¹⁵¹ As far as al-Junayd was

his Family, used to put it between the Muslims and the polytheists no arrow of the polytheists could reach the Muslims" (Mufid 415-416). According to the Imam, this knowledge was passed down to him directly. As he explains,

My traditions are my father's traditions; my father's traditions are my grandfather's traditions; my grandfather's traditions are the traditions of 'Ali ibn Abu Ṭalib, the Commander of the Faithful; the traditions of 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, are the traditions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and his Family; and the traditions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and his Family, are the word of Allah, the Mighty and High. (Mufid 414)

¹⁵¹ For Imam Malik's (d. 795) view see A.R.I. Doi's "The *Muwatta'* of Imam Malik on the Genesis of the Shari'a Law: A Western Scholar's Confusion" (27-41), and Muhammad Guraya's "Historical Background of the Compilation of the *Muwatta'* of Malik b. Anas" (379-92), as well as his *Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence*. For Ibn Hibban (d. 965), see his *Sahih*, his *Ma'rifat al-majruhin wa al-du'afa' min al-muhaddithin*, and his *Kitab al-thiqat*. For al-Ash'ari (d. 931?), see his *Maqalat*; for al-Junayd (d. 910?), see

concerned, whenever a person invokes Allah with a heart detached from this world, he pronounces the supreme name. According to Imam al-Murtada (d. 1437), however, all the names of Allah were equal in rank and dignity, and each one of them was the supreme name. To support his claim, al-Murtada used to recite the following verse from the Qur'an: "By whatever name ye call upon Him, to Him belong the most beautiful names (17:110). This was also the opinion of Ṭabarsi (d. 1153) who said that all of the names of Allah are supreme.

According to a *ḥadith* [a prophetic tradition or saying], the supreme name [*al-ism al-a'zam*], must essentially be sought in Surat al-Ikhlāṣ (112). The tradition relates that a man prayed to Allah saying: "O Allah, I pray to you testifying that you are Allah, and there is no Truth but You, the One, the Unique, and the Impregnable. You have not begotten nor were you begotten, and there is none equal unto You." Upon hearing him, the Prophet Muḥammad proclaimed: "By Him in whose hands is my soul, he has addressed Allah with the supreme name" (Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, and Ibn Majah). In another *ḥadith*, the Prophet Muḥammad was asked about the supreme name and said that it was to be found in the Qur'an in Surat al-Baqarah: "And your God is One God; there is no god save Him, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful" (2:163) and in Surat al-ʿImran [The Family of ʿImran] "*Alif. Lam. Mim.* Allah! There is no god save Him, the Alive, the Eternal" (3:1-2) (Aḥmad, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah). According to some theosophical speculation, the supreme name of Allah might be: *Hu* or *Huwa* [He], perhaps even *Ya Huwa* [O He], supposing a link with the Hebrew *Yahweh*,¹⁵² *al-Ḥayy al-Qayyum* [the Living, the Everlasting]; *Dhu al-Jalal wa al-Ikram* [the Lord of Majesty and Bounty]; or that it can found in the "isolated letters" at the beginning of several Qur'anic

al-Qushayri's (d. 1072) *Risalat al-Qushayriyyah*, al-Sha'rani's (d. 1565-66) *al-Ṭabaqat al-kubra*, as well as Ibn al-Jawzi's (d. 1201) chapter on al-Junayd in his *Sifat al-safwah*. For al-Junayd and al-Bistami (d. 874), see al-Hujviri's (d. 1072) *al-Kashf al-mahjub*. For al-Bistami, see Badawi's *Shatahat al-Sufiyyah* (1:70), as well as al-Sarraj's (d. 988) *Kitab al-Luma'* (461). For more on Khalil (d. 786), see: Wild's *Das Kitab al-'Ain und die arabische Lexicographie*. For a bibliography of early Arabic grammarians, see al-Zubaydi's (d. 989) *Ṭabaqat al-nahawiyyin al-lughawiyyin* as well as *The Fihrist of al-Nadim*, edited and translated by Bayard Dodge.

¹⁵² There are Shi'ite traditions which suggest that the supreme name of Allah is actually Hebrew, thus reaffirming the supposed link between *Ya Huwa* and *Yahweh*, which may be nothing more than folk etymology. According to Hebrew linguists, the Tetragrammaton is generally assumed to be derived from the verb HWY "to be" or "to become" a causative form with the third person prefix; hence, the initial Y, like the Hebrew *Yihyeh* and the Arabic *Yahya*, namely, "He who lives." The name *Yahweh* would literally mean "He causes to become." Another tradition, however, regards the name as coming from three different verb forms sharing the same root YWH: HYH *haya* [He was], HWH, *howê* [He is], and YHYH *yihyê* [He will be]. The name *Yahweh* would simultaneously mean "He was / He is / He will be" underlying the timeless nature of the Eternal One. It could be loosely translated as "He, the Eternal" which would be the equivalent of the Arabic *al-Huwa al-Qayyum*.

chapters.

Conclusions

Regardless of the existence or identity of the supreme name, Muslim thinkers are in agreement that Allah can only be known by means of His divine names, each one representing a symbol or sign of the Almighty. As the Qur'an repeatedly teaches, all the things in the cosmos are *ayat Allah*, the signs of *Allah*, which means that everything bears witness to the presence and reality of the Divine. In fact, the holy book of Islam employs the term "sign" in singular and plural form 288 times in several closely related senses (Murata 24). As Sachiko Murata says, "All the qualities found in inanimate objects, plants, animals, and humans, have their roots in the divine names" (237). In Islam, all things [*ashya'*] or entities [*a'yan*] are manifestations [*tajalliyat*] of the divine names [*asma' Allah*], attributes and qualities [*sifat*], since they all derive their existence and reason for being from the One and Unique Existent. As Murata explains, "God is invisible by definition. Yet, traces and intimations of His awesome reality can be gleaned from all things, if only we meditate upon them" (24). Or, as we read in the Qur'an, "There is not a thing but celebrates His praise; and yet ye understand not how they declare His glory!" (17:44). Through the use of the ninety-nine names of Allah, Muslims acknowledge the signs of Allah which surround them, and declare His Glory in perpetual praise. The most beautiful names are not only a profession of faith, they are a procession, stepping stones along the path of spiritual perfection, leading to the state of sublime submission, union with Allah, as embodied by the Complete Human Being [*al-insan al-kamil*], the universal synthesis of the divine names.

Chapter 30

The Perfect Human:

The Universal Synthesis of the Divine Names¹⁵³

According to Muslim tradition, the most beautiful names of Allah [*asma' Allah al-husna*] are ninety-nine in number, all of which are found, in one form or another, in the Holy Qur'an (7:180; 17:110; 20:8; 59:24). As the essence of Allah, Islam, and the Qur'an, the divine names have played an important role in the interpretation of Islamic scripture. Invoked in prayer and in common speech, the divine names are also employed during *dhikr* or remembrance of Allah. Among the Sufis, be they Sunni or Shi'i, the ninety-nine names take on heightened significance as steps along the path of spiritual perfection, reaching its peak in the universal archetype of the Perfect Person who, by reaching the state of sublime submission, has become the microcosmic manifestation of all the divine names.

According to a famous *hadith qudsi* or sacred saying, Almighty Allah says: "I was a Hidden Treasure [*kanz makhfi*], and I wished to be known. So, I created humankind, then I revealed myself to them, and they recognized me." In some Sufi versions of this saying, Allah not only reveals the reason for creation, but also the role of the created, saying:

I was a Hidden Treasure that desired to be known. So I manifested all the creation to reveal the essence of the deep secret: knowledge of myself. He whom I created to reveal the treasure carries within himself this treasure but he must explode the mountain of his existence to discover the treasure which is hidden within it. ([http://www.sufimaster.org/teachings/secret love.htm](http://www.sufimaster.org/teachings/secret%20love.htm))¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ This study was previously published in *Sufi: A Journal of Sufism*. 71 (2006): 20-25. It also appeared in an expanded version in *Arabic, Islam, and the Allah Lexicon: How Language Shapes our Conception of God* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006): 243-272. It should be noted that many of the concepts discussed in this chapter [the perfect person, manifestation...] were not an intrinsic part of early Islam. However, merely because they were not known the early Muslims does not make them un-Islamic. They are philosophical developments inspired by the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

¹⁵⁴ This tradition, which is commonly quoted in Sufi works, and by Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 1240) in particular, is considered spurious by the traditionists as it does not contain an *isnad* or chain of narration. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, "It is not from the words of the Prophet, and there is no known *isnad* for it: neither *sahih* [authentic] nor *da'if* [weak];" al-Zarkashi (d. 794), Ibn Hajar (d. 1449), al-Suyuti (d. 1505), and others agreed with him. Nonetheless, Ibn al-'Arabi considers it authentic on the basis of "unveiling" and even the traditionists agree that its meaning is true. As al-Qari' admits, "its meaning is correct, deduced from the statement of Allah, 'I created the *jinn* and humankind only that they might worship Me' (51:56), i.e. to recognise/know me, as Ibn 'Abbas has explained" (Hassan). For the long version of this famous *hadith qudsi*, see Ibn al-'Arabi's *Uqlat al-mustawfiz* (48) and Henry Corbin's *L'Imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d'Ibn 'Arabi* (98). z

As Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, "I created the *jinn* and humankind only that they might worship Me" (51:56). According to the Prophet's companion, Ibn 'Abbas, the verb "to worship" in this context, is to be understood in the sense of "to know" (Murata 26; Ibn al-'Arabi, 131). The purpose of creation is inseparable from the concept of divine love. However, since human beings cannot know or love their Creator as an inconceivable transcendent Essence, Allah revealed His most beautiful names so that he could be invoked and remembered (Beneito v). In the words of Ibn al-'Arabi, "He brought the world into existence to make manifest the authority of the Names" (37). As Beneito explains,

Through His Love and Compassion, Allah--"Hidden" with regards to His Essence--manifests Himself in the cosmos, in human beings, and in the revealed Book, all places of His manifestation, through which he makes Himself "Manifest" to humankind. His names--which Ibn al-'Arabi considers as 'relations' [*nisab*]-allow humankind to know Him through His similarity and to have knowledge of His incomparability, reconciling immanence and transcendence through a middle path which consists in the union of opposites.

The most beautiful names are the means through which Allah reveals the manifestations of His names throughout the cosmos (vi). They are the means of reaching Him, and the response to His command: "Call upon Me and I will answer you" (40:60). As a result, belief in God is not in itself enough. As 'Ali Muhammad Naqvi explains,

A person must know the attributes of God, because it is the knowledge of the attributes of God which enables man to cultivate in himself the noblest of human qualities...The knowledge of God's attributes purifies man's mind and soul, his beliefs and actions, but mere intellectual knowledge of God's attributes is not sufficient. We must have an unflinching conviction, firmly rooted in our minds and hearts, so that we may remain immune from doubt and immoral action. If we have conviction that God is our Lord, that He oversees everything, then we may not commit a sin even at a place where there is no one to check us.¹⁵⁵ (Naqvi 3-4)

Knowledge of Allah is knowledge of the divine names. Knowledge of the divine names is

¹⁵⁵ According to Shi'ite belief, on the Prophets and Fourteen Ma'sumin are infallible. Nonetheless, the term "infallible" is also applied to those falling outside of this category, like Zaynab (d. 682?), the sister of Husayn (d. 680), whom her nephew, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (d. 710?) referred to as an "un-taught scholar" or '*alimah ghayr mu'allamah*'. The same applies to the sister of Imam al-Rida (d. 818-19), Fatimah, who was known as al-Ma'sumah, the infallible one. So a distinction must be made between those who are infallible by divine gift and those who have acquired "infallibility" through piety, knowledge, absolute faith, and knowledge of certainty.

knowledge of self, and the divine nature which lies latent in all human beings.

According to a well-known *hadith* [tradition] from the Prophet Muhammad, “Allah created Adam in his image” [*inna Allaha khalaqa Adama ‘ala suratih*].¹⁵⁶ According to Sufi thought, this tradition indicates that the primordial nature [*fitrah*] of man is the epitome or universal synthesis of the Divine Essence in its earthly and spiritual manifestations.¹⁵⁷ As Ghazali explains in *Mishkat al-anwar*,

Allah, out of His grace and mercy gave to Adam a summary “image” or “form,” embracing every genus and species in the whole world, inasmuch that it was as if Adam were all that was in the world, or was the summarized copy of the world. And Adam’s form--this summarized “image”--was inscribed in the handwriting of Allah, so that Adam is the Divine Word. (135)

Adam, as the Archetype of Man, embodies the Divine Presence and the divine names. As the Qur’an says, “He taught Adam the names, all of them” (2:31).

In Islam, in general, the goal of the believer is to conform to the character of the Prophet Muhammad, the greatest model of *al-tahalluq bi asma’ Allah* or assuming the

¹⁵⁶ Although this tradition is considered suspect by traditionists, and condemned outright by the jurists, the representatives of the spiritual tradition in Islam accept it as it epitomizes the metaphysical underpinnings of their position (Murata 333). As Ibn al-‘Arabi (d. 1240) remarks, the tradition is “sound on the basis of unveiling [ie. by mystical vision], but not established by way of transmission” (qtd. Murata 333). Another variant of the tradition says that “Allah created Adam in the form of the Most Merciful” which, according to Jami (d. 1492), is found in *Riwayat ma’ani al-akhbar* of Muhammad ibn Ishaq ibn Yasar. Cf. Jami, *Naqd al-nusus* 94.

Issues of authenticity aside, the tradition is subject to numerous interpretations. According to the first interpretation, the pronoun refers to Allah; hence, “Allah created Adam in His Own Image.” In other words, Adam was made in the image of God. This is the interpretation adopted by the Umayyad line and practically theorized by Ibn Taymiyyah and taken as an irrefutable fact by the Salafis. This view has been refuted by both Sunni and Shi’ite scholars. According to the second interpretation, the pronoun refers to Adam. Consequently, “Allah created Adam in his image;” namely, God created Adam in the mould of Adam, without having undergone the stages of creation (23:13-14). As Imam Muhammad al-Baqir said, “It was a recently created image.” According to the third interpretation, the pronoun refers to the human prototype. According to a tradition, the Prophet heard a man say to someone: “May Allah make your face and the one who resembles you ugly!” The Prophet admonished him, saying, “Hold on a minute! Do not say this for verily Allah created Adam in his image.” As Shaykh Saduq explains, “The anthropomorphists took out the first part of this tradition and said: ‘Verily, Allah created Adam in His Image.’ Hence, they went astray in this meaning and led others astray. According to the fourth interpretation, the pronoun refers to the person which is struck. According to a tradition, the Prophet said “When you hit a person, avoid the face, for verily, Allah created Adam in his image.”

¹⁵⁷ According to Islam, all human beings have a natural predisposition [*fitrah*] to believe in the oneness of God (7:172). According to a *hadith qudsi*, Almighty Allah said: “I created my servants in the right religion, but the devils made them go astray” (Muslim). The Messenger of Allah also said that “Each child is born in a state of *fitrah*, but his parents make him a Jew or a Christian” (Bukhari and Muslim). As Ibn al-‘Arabi (d. 1240) explains, “Not a single one of His creatures can fail to find Him in its primordial and original nature [*bi fitratihi wa jibillatihi*]. So the whole world prays to Him, prostrates itself before Him, and glorifies His praise” (2002: 183). And, of course, “tongues speak of Him” (183), using the Allah Lexicon.

attributes of Allah, in which the qualities of the divine names manifest themselves in harmony (Beneito 310). As Ibn al-‘Arabi says, “No one has realized this station [of servitude] to its perfection like the Messenger of Allah” (131). In Sufi thought, each step that the Prophet took during his ascension to Heaven represented one of the divine names he had embodied. Besides the Messenger of Allah, the Imams, in Shi‘ism, who are known as *hujjat Allah* or Proofs of Allah, and the *aqtab* or Poles in Sufism, are also sources of emulation [*maraji’ al-taqlid*].¹⁵⁸ The goal of all believers is to literally become *muslimun*, those who surrender completely and absolutely to Allah, actualizing the divine names which exist within them as virtualities. This was clearly conveyed in the Prophet’s words “Assume the character traits of Allah” (Ibn al-‘Arabi 308, note 122) and the *hadith qudsi* in which Allah says, “My earth does not encompass Me, nor does My heaven, but the heart of My servant, the person of true faith, does encompass Me” (315, note 7; 323, note 37). In other words, all of Allah, all of His Attributes, can fit in the heart and soul of a “Complete Human Being.”

In Islam, a “Complete Human Being” is one who has reached the highest psychological, physical, and spiritual stage of being.¹⁵⁹ This Perfect Person is like a sun around which the divine attributes revolve. Although the stages differ between different Sufi orders, they may include: the aspirant, the novice, the wanderer, the knower, the guide, the saint and, finally, the complete human being or perfect person. The “Complete Human Being” is the one who has effaced his ego, become selfless, abandoned his individual identity, erased his “I,” and reached a state of union with the Supreme Identity. Ibn al-‘Arabi uses the Arabic term *muwahhid* to designate the perfect spiritual union in which the believer loses himself in Divine Unity. It is the state in which the knower and the known are erased, which is known as *fana’ al-fani* [annihilation of the annihilated].¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Al-Ghazali (d. 1111) refers to the Perfect Person as *al-Muta’*, the Vicegerent, which Massignon identifies with the *Qutb* or Axis.

¹⁵⁹ For more on the metaphysical aspect of the Perfect Person, see al-Jili’s (d. 1365-66) *Kitab al-insan al-kamil*, translated into French by Titus Burckhardt as *De l’homme universel*. Pages 30-35 and 40-45 of this latter include a commentary on the divine attributes. See, also, Qashani’s (d. 1330?) *Kitab* and Alawi’s commentaries on the divine name *Allah* with relation to the *basmalah* in *al-Minahu al-quddusiyyah*. Ghazali’s (d. 1111) *Fada’ih al-batiniyya*, Lahiji Fayyaz’s (d. 17th c.) *Gawhar-e murad* and Jami’s (d. 1492) *Nafahat al-uns* can also be consulted. For the Perfect Person as the universal synthesis of the divine names and attributes in Ibn al-‘Arabi (d. 1240), see Chitticks’s *The Self-Disclosure of God*, particularly pp. xxiii-xxv, as well chapter six of Titus Burkhardt’s *An Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*.

¹⁶⁰ Several prophetic traditions connected the Islamic concept of enlightenment are cited in Michel Chodkiewicz’s critically annotated translation of the *Meccan Revelations*, including: “Whoever dies has already begun his resurrection;” “Not one of you will see his Lord until he dies” (277, note 19) and “Death is before the meeting with God” (281: note 43).

The person who reaches the state of *muwahhid* sees the Divine Unity in everything and does not associate or attribute anything inappropriate with it. Almighty Allah, in a famous *hadith qudsi*, describes the absolute surrender of a divine servant in the following terms: “When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks” (Bukhari).

According to Islamic thought, “Perfect People” are those who have fully submitted, who have become at one with the Divine, like the great spiritual guides, the Prophets in particular, the Twelve Imams--among Shi‘ite Gnostics--and the “Poles” [*aqtab*]-among Sunni Gnostics--namely, the *awliyya’ Allah* [the Saints or Friends of Allah]. For Shi‘ite Muslims, the Fourteen Infallibles embody the divine attributes. It is for this reason that the Imams proclaimed: “We are the most beautiful names” (Kulayni). For Shi‘ites, the Imam is the *khalifat Allah* [the representative or vicar of the Divinity], the pillar of the divine names, namely, the manifestation of the divine attributes and qualities through which the Supreme Principle or the Universal Possibility make Himself know to His creatures. The Imam is the supreme mediator [*wasilah kubra*], synthesis of the divine attributes and qualities through which the Divinity is known by the creatures and through which the Divinity knows its creatures. The Imam is the one who has “become the Reality” [*al-mutahaqqiq bi al-Haqq*], namely, the one who, by perfecting himself, has fully manifested the totality of the divine attributes through the perfection of human attributes or moral virtues [*khuluq*], reaching the state of identification with His Celestial Model, the Complete Human Being [*al-insan al-kamil*], the first creation, who has transformed into his own image of human form on earth. His limbs, acts and words are epiphanies [*mazahir*] of the Absolute. For Sufi Muslims, each Muhammadan Pole has a *hijir* or “constant invocation” specific to himself. The *hijir* of the greatest Poles is the name Allah. This explains why the supreme Pole forever pertains to this name and is called ‘Abd Allah. The constant invocations of the other Poles include well-known formulae that are used in prayer and invocation, including *la ilaha illa Allah* [There is no god but Allah], *Allahu Akbar* [Allah is the Greatest], *subhana Allah* [Glory be to Allah], *alhamdulillah* [Praise be to Allah], the most common phrases from the Allah Lexicon, as well as various Qur’anic verses.

On a more earthly as opposed to ethereal level, many Muslims have a favorite divine name and Allah expression, just like they have a preferred chapter or verse from the Qur’an. When Muslims give their children names of servitude like ‘Abd Allah, they

want their children to live up to them, to embody them, in the same way that divine names are actualized by the Friends of Allah.¹⁶¹ They do so in accordance with the words of the Prophet: “On the Day of Judgment you will be called by your names and your fathers names, so choose beautiful names [for your children]” (Abu Dawud). As Earl H. Waugh has observed, “This care about names has perhaps developed from the sensitivity to God’s beautiful names in the Qur’an (17:110), and the great piety with which the ninety-nine names of God are recited” (224). When it comes to selecting names for one’s offspring, the Messenger of Allah has said that “The names dearest to Allah are ‘Abd Allah and ‘Abd al-Rahman“ (Abu Dawud). Parents who name their son ‘Abd al-Halim, the Servant of the Gentle One, want him to be gentle; those who name their son ‘Abd al-‘Alim or ‘Abd al-Hakim, want him to be wise; and those who name their son ‘Abd al-Rahman, want him to be compassionate. While each human being embodies the divine attributes, and often one in particular, many Muslims are actually named with the divine names.¹⁶²

According to Islamic thought, the Great or Complete Human Being [*al-insan al-kabir* or *al-insan al-kamil*], is the universal synthesis of the divine names and attributes. As Muslim Gnostics say, the universe is a Great Man, and man is a Small Universe [*al-kawnu insanun kabirun wa al-insanu kawnun saghir*] (Murata 23). In fact, the Complete Human Being [*al-insan al-kamil*] is the universal archetype in whose image was created the *humanized human* or *small man* [*al-insan al-saghir*], the “Son of Adam“ [*ibn Adam*] in whom Allah placed all of the realities [*haqa’iq*] of the macrocosmos [*al-‘alam al-kabir*], in such a way that man, despite the size of his body, represents the entire universe. The “Complete Human Being” is the universal synthesis of existence which embodies the virtual potentiality of all forms of being [*al-wujud*], through both divine and human attributes. As Ibn al-‘Arabi explains, “[T]here is no name that God has applied to Himself that He has not also applied to us” (214). It is by means of these attributes that Allah brings Himself close to His creatures and gives them the opportunity to approach His Essence (De la Torre 24). As Friedlander explains, “The names of Allah are connected

¹⁶¹ From a strictly Shi‘ite point of view, the Prophets, Messengers, and the Fourteen Infallibles may hold a station higher than that of Perfect People. In the *insan al-kamil*, perfection is acquired through effort. In the case of the Prophets, Messengers, and Fourteen Infallibles, it is divinely gifted.

¹⁶² Just like every Amerindian has a totem, a *nahua*, an animal characteristic he aims to incarnate, every Muslim, or rather, every human being, regardless of religion, has been given a gift, a divine quality, which needs to be discovered and actualized. According to Ibn al-‘Arabi, this is one’s divine duty: “Just as He who loves you gave you your creation, so also you should give Him that for which you were created” (2002: 191).

with the life of man. All aspects of life can be seen in the names” (10). As such, there is a name of God for every human trait (De la Torre 25). This is why the Prophet Muhammad is quoted as saying: “He who knows himself, knows his Lord.”¹⁶³ In other words, the attributes of Allah are to be found in souls, the receptacles [*qawabil*] or place of manifestation of the Divine Presence.¹⁶⁴ As Beneito explains,

Human beings have the possibility, depending on their predisposition and receptivity, to adopt the qualities of the various names of the One and the Multiple, reintegrating them by means of his concentration, spiritual aspiration and breadth of his heart, in their essential Unity... It is essential to understand that the adoption of the qualities of the names does not imply appropriation. Human beings are the receptacle, the “place” in which the human attributes are manifested. Human beings participate in the attributes by which, through the grace of divine providence, they adorn themselves as faithful servants of God.

Human beings, by nature, possess all the possibilities of perfection.¹⁶⁵

As a result, they have been placed in a central or axiomatic position in the universe. As Beneito explains,

The servant...is not a mere man or woman, a common person or individual believer...but rather the human being *par excellence*, the Complete Human Being, created in the image of God, as a microcosmic synthesis and Pole or Axis of the Universe. Without a Complete Human Being, the cosmos would be annihilated.

To become a saint, from an Islamic point of view, is to fully realize all the possibilities of the human condition, uniting with the universal human prototype, “The Complete Human

¹⁶³ According to *hadith* specialists, this is actually a saying of the Sufi Yahya ibn Mu’adh al-Razi which has been wrongly attributed to the Prophet (Ibn al-‘Arabi, 2002: 308, note 123, and Massignon 88).

¹⁶⁴ Human beings have a spirit or life-force known as the [*nafs*] which represents animal instincts. They also have a soul [*ruh*] in which divine qualities lay latent. The worst of people may have the spiritual form of animals like donkeys, pigs, and dogs... The best of people are those who have the spiritual form of a true human being (Ibn al-‘Arabi 278, note 27). Once, when Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (d. 765-66) was performing the pilgrimage, his companion pointed out that there were many pilgrims. The Imam responded that there were few pilgrims. He then touched the eyes of his companion, allowing him to see the souls of the pilgrims, and saw nothing but beasts circumambulating the Ka’bah.

¹⁶⁵ This belief is perfectly in line with Abraham Maslow’s concept of self-actualization. As he explains, “Self-actualization is the intrinsic growth of what is already in the organism, or more accurately, of what the organism is.” The concept of the Archetype of Adam and the Perfect Person also reflects Islam’s position on the nature versus nurture debate. According to the Muslim faith, humans are innately righteous; they are only corrupted by their upbringing and environment. As Maslow believed, people are basically good, not evil.

Being.”¹⁶⁶ From the perspective of *tasawwuf* [Sufism] and *‘irfan Shi‘i* [Shi‘ite mysticism], spiritual realization [*tahaqquq ruhani*] consists in assuming each divine attribute step by step, eventually reaching union with the Divine [*Allah*] and the cosmos which is the representation of the “Complete Human Being,” the mirror which reflects the highest grade of purity and simplicity of all the divine names. The entire process is one of unveiling. As the Prophet said, “Allah has seventy or seventy thousand veils of light and darkness” (Majlisi qtd. in Chittick, 1989: 264, note 49, and Ghazali, 1952: 76-77). The quest of each Muslim is to remove veils of darkness and veils of light. According to Nicholson, these light-veils correspond to various degrees of sainthood (78). As Ghazali explains, the first step along this path of spiritual purification is the understanding of the true meaning of the divine attributes (1952: 169). The adoption of divine names, Islam’s ninety-nine point plan for human perfection, culminates in the creation of the “Complete Human Being,” also known as ‘Abd al-Samad, the Servant of the Eternal Universal Pillar, who serves as the place of manifestation of the divine names (Beneito 246).

According to Sufi thought, the Complete Human Being, who shares the original nature of Adam and the Muhammadan Reality [*al-haqiqah al-muhammadiyah*], is the microcosmic synthesis of creation, the mirror in which the Divine Reality contemplates Himself, and the pupil through which He sees (Beneito v). As is often stated in Islamic mysticism, the Divine contemplates Himself and everything which He [*hu*] has achieved in the cosmos by means of the “Complete Human Being.” As Beneito explains, “When a human being develops a divine character, adorning himself with the most noble qualities, he becomes the gaze of God from the cosmos...the presence of the manifestation of the names of God” (243-44). It is for this reason that the “Complete Human Being” is known as the “Sole Prototype,” the “Evident Prototype” which is spoken of in the Qur’an. In fact, it is the Universal Being which differentiates itself in successive polarizations, as active and passive, as species and individual, as male and female, as macrocosmos and microcosmos, as universe and man. Each of these elements has their opposite in the plan of ontological perfection.

As the names of Allah are limitless, so are the ways to Allah. It is for this reason that the Prophet said that “The numbers of paths to God is equal to the number of human souls” (Chittick, 1989: 52, Note 1) and it is why Yahya or John the Baptist told Ibn al-

¹⁶⁶ Unlike Catholic saints, Muslim *awliya’* are not canonized, enumerated or objects of prayer. In Sufism, Shi‘ism and traditional Sunnism, many Muslims ask “saints” to intercede with Allah on their behalf.

‘Arabi in the Fifth Heaven that “Each person has a path, that no one else but he travels...paths that come through the traveling itself” (223). Each person has a path, each path is a divine name, and each path starts with the most beautiful names, the source of the Allah Lexicon, and a ninety-nine step plan for human perfection.

Many people wonder how they can become pious Muslims. According to the spiritual tradition of Islam, the answer is to be found in the most beautiful names of Allah, the ninety-nine point plan for human perfection which is based on the *shari‘ah*. The divine attributes, the most beautiful names, are also human attributes. If people pray, fast, pay the poor-due, perform the *hajj*, perform *jihad*, promote the good, forbid the wrong, love the Household of the Prophet, and keep away from their enemies, they are good Muslims. Complete and total submission to Allah, however, requires more than that. Performing the *wajibat* [religious obligations] and avoiding the *haram* [religiously forbidden] is merely the beginning of the journey towards Allah. And as Almighty Allah has promised: For every step one take towards Him, He will take two towards us. If one goes to him walking, He will come to us running (Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah). So the first step is to cast off the veils of darkness and vice to pass through the veils of virtue and light.

The traveler on the path takes one attribute, any attribute, and attempts to embrace it and embody it. One Muslim may adopt the attribute of *al-Sabbur*, and work on his *nafs*, on his personality, his soul, his character, until he becomes perfectly patient. A Muslim woman, for example, may simultaneously embody the divine attributes of *al-Jamil*, the Beautiful, and *al-Batin*, the Veiled. Since beauty is a feminine attribute, a Muslim woman is a manifestation of divine beauty. When a Muslim sees the beautiful face of a woman, he is contemplating the beauty of the Divine. As the famous *hadith* says, “Allah is Beautiful and love beauty” (Bukhari). While Allah is Beautiful, He also hides His Beauty behind the Veil [*hijab*] as divine beauty can only be contemplated by those who are pure of heart, the saints, the *awliyya*’ or “Friends of Allah.” Likewise, a Muslim woman’s beauty can only be admired by her direct relatives [*mahram*].¹⁶⁷ She is

¹⁶⁷ The veil [*hijab*] is not a male imposition as some tendentious interpretations would have it. It is the free choice of Muslim women who wear it to protect themselves from inappropriate gazes. In the Muslim world, the *hijab* is viewed almost exclusively as a legal obligation from the standpoint of Islamic jurisprudence [*fiqh*], and justified on social, and sometimes, political grounds. If there are men in the Islamic world who wish to impose the veil on women, it is because they have lost the spiritual significance and elevated symbolism of the scarf. It is through the *hijab*, rich in mystical meaning, that Allah manifests Himself, speaks to our souls, and makes His Presence known in Islamic society.

beautiful, but she is *batinah*: hidden and veiled. The Muslim mystic, the *'irfani*, may adopt the attribute of *al-'Arif*, the One who Knows. The scholar may adopt the attribute of *al-Hakim*, the philosopher and the jurist the attribute of *al-'Alim*, the *mujahid* the attribute of *al-Muntaqim*, the Avenger, the judge the attribute of *al-'Adil*, the Just, all assuming different attributes of Allah, and witnessing to the presence of the Divine. Of course, it is only the Friends of Allah who can adopt all the divine names, a state described by Ibn al-'Arabi as follows:

[W]hen a servant...knows that he is not [created] according to the form of the world, but only according to the form of God [*al-Haqq*], then God “makes him journey” through His Names, “in order to cause him to see His Signs” (17:1) within him. Thus [the servant] comes to know that He is what is designated by every divine Name---whether or not that Name is one of those described as “beautiful.” It is through those Names that God appears in His servants, and it is through Them that the servant takes on the different “colorings” of his states: for They are Names of God, but “colorings” [of the soul] in us. (213).

Adopting divine attributes, however, does not mean that one becomes Allah. As Ghazali warned:

when one sloughs off the passions of his soul with its desires and concerns, no room remains in him for anything other than God, nor will he have any concern other than God...So if nothing exists in his heart but the majesty of God and His beauty, so that he becomes immersed in it, he does become as though he were He, but not so that he actually is God... But here lies a pitfall, for if one does not have a firm footing in things rational, he may fail to distinguish one of them from the other, and looking upon the perfection of his essence and how it may be adorned with the finery of truth which shines in it, he will think that he is He [God], and will say ‘I am the Truth.’ (1999: 153)

The fact that believers acquire one of the characteristics of the Divine Essence does not mean that they become Allah, since Allah is the synthesis of all the divine names, and the Muslim can only aspire to adopt one, some, or all of them, through their mention. In other words, everything in the human being manifests Allah’s names and attributes, while the individual human being as a whole---at least in the case of those who are fully human and have become Allah’s vicegerents--manifests all Allah’s names (Murata 37).

If the name *Allah*, which refers to the Essence, does not have a precise meaning,

and cannot be comprehended, the most beautiful names, on the contrary, are divinely donned descriptions and the only means of understanding the Divinity. Ninety-nine in number, the most beautiful names are eloquent expressions of the multiplicity within the Divinity, and the conceptual core of the Qur'an. The most beautiful names are the foundational framework of Islamic speculative metaphysics, reaching its peak in the universal archetype of the Complete Human Being who, by reaching the state of sublime submission, has become the manifestation of Allah.

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Chapter 31

*Jihad in Islam*¹⁶⁸

Islam is a religion of peace, love, justice, and equality. For a series of internal and external reasons, the religion has unfortunately been depicted in a negative light. As a result, many people consider Islam to be a religion of hatred and violence, a stereotype spread by many sources which portray Muslims as bloodthirsty imperialists or terrorists. While many people accept these stereotypes uncritically, others do not. Still, there are many well-intentioned people who remain uncertain as to the true nature of Islam. What exactly is this thing called *jihad*? What are the guidelines found in the sacred text of the Muslims? What are the Prophet Muhammad's teachings regarding *jihad* and its implications? And how have these rules been applied and respected from a historical perspective?

First of all, it is essential to understand that Islam is a complete way of life. Thus, Islam could not have neglected commenting upon war. As can be expected, the rules and guidelines regarding war or *jihad* are clearly iterated in the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet. Historically, this guidance has been implemented by all true Muslims. Before we go any further, however, it is necessary to accurately define the meaning of the word *jihad* as it is often the subject of misunderstanding.

Jihad is an Arabic word which literally means "to struggle." It refers to a general struggle against all forms of evil. The term encompasses many different levels and dimensions. *Jihad*, for example, is not only physical: it is spiritual as well. On returning from a battle, the Prophet Muhammad mentioned to his Companions that they were leaving the lesser *jihad* and now had to concentrate on the greater *jihad*. He referred to the physical *jihad* as the lesser *jihad* and to the *jihad* against one's own soul or inner-self as the greater *jihad*. The reason that the *jihad* against one's own soul was greater was because it was perpetual whereas the physical *jihad* was temporal.

Although *jihad* is often wrongly depicted as "holy war," the Prophet used the term to describe a special type of socio-spiritual struggle. As the Messenger of Allah said, "The best *jihad* is that a person speaks the truth before a tyrant ruler" (Abu Dawud). He

¹⁶⁸ This was the first undergraduate university essay written by the author. It was submitted for a first year philosophy class at the University of Toronto in 1990. Despite its defects, it has been included in this collection of essays to demonstrate the author's precocious intellectual development and insight. As historically minded readers will observe, the author was openly denouncing terrorism years before the rise of the Taliban and the spread of suicide bombing. The paper was given an F by the author's prejudiced professor.

also urged Muslims to “Fight against those who associate with Allah with your money, with your lives, and with your tongues” (Ahmad). As interesting as the spiritual struggle may be, we shall concentrate solely on the physical *jihad* in this study, examining its rules and regulations. In order to do so, we must examine the primary source of law in Islam: the Holy Qur’an.

The Holy Qur’an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad over a period of twenty-three years. The verses that came down from Allah related to many events that the Muslims were experiencing. Many practices of Islam were revealed in stages. These included the prohibition of usury and alcohol as well as the commands regarding *jihad*. In Mecca, the Muslims were a small minority. They were persecuted, abused, tortured, and murdered by the polytheists merely because of their belief that there was no god but Allah. In their minority state, the Muslims were prevented from fighting, a logical strategy considering the fact that they could easily have been exterminated. During these ten difficult years, the Prophet devoted himself to peacefully propagating Islam without the use of force whatsoever. In fact, when attacked by the infidels, the Muslims adopted passive resistance and non-violence. Due to the severe persecution they faced, many of the Prophet’s earliest Companions were forced into exile in Abyssinia. Rather than fight the polytheists in Mecca, the majority of the Muslims joined the Prophet and migrated to Medina as religious refugees.

During the early days in Mecca, the Muslims were forbidden to fight. As Almighty Allah revealed in the Holy Qur’an: “control your hands, observe the prayer, and pay the poor-due” (4:77). Later on, the Muslims were permitted to fight under certain circumstances: “To those against whom war is made, permission is given to fight for they are wronged; and verily, Allah is the Most Powerful for their aid. They are those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right, for no cause except that they said: ‘Our Lord is Allah’” (22:39-40). Unlike fascism, which advocates a state of perpetual war, Islam advocates a state of perpetual peace, resorting to non-violence, passive resistance, and exile when placed in a position of weakness, and resorting solely to self-defense when placed in a position of power.

Unlike other ideologies, the Islamic attitude towards war is realistic. So long as there is oppression, war will be necessary. So long as there is an oppressor, exploiter, and persecutor, there will have to be a liberator. As far as the Qur’an is concerned, Muslims were designated as the protectors of their own community as well as the protectors of the communities of Jews and Christians which lived among them. As Almighty Allah

explains in the Holy Qur'an, "Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure" (22:40). It should be stressed, however, that Islam forbids coercing people from their religions. As Almighty Allah commands in the Holy Qur'an: "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (2:256). Forcing non-Muslims to convert to Islam is as illicit as obliging Muslims to practice Islam by force.

As far as the Qur'an commands, the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims should be based on mutual respect, tolerance, and a deep-seating appreciation for diversity. As Almighty Allah instructed the Prophet to preach: "O ye that reject faith! I worship not that which ye worship, nor will ye worship that which I worship. And I will not worship that which ye have been wont to worship, nor will ye worship that which I worship. To you be your Way and to me mine" (109:1-6). The Prophet was told by Allah to: "Invite all to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious" (16:125). As Almighty Allah instructs: "Dispute not with the People of the Book except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury). But say, 'We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us, and in that which came down to you; and our God and your God is One; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam)'" (29:46).

Despite the claims of some Western historians, *jihad* is not imperialistic in nature. The goal of *jihad* is to get rid of oppression and open new lands to the message of Islam by preaching, and not by force. The believers are described in the Qur'an as follows: "They are those who, if we establish them in the land, establish prayer and give regular charity, and enjoin the right, and forbid the wrong" (22:41). As they were under attack by their enemies, Muslims were allowed to fight those who attacked them: "Fight, in the cause of Allah, those who fight you" (2:190). Finally, it was revealed to fight against all of the unbelievers who were at war with them: "fight the pagans all together as they fight you all together" (9:29). And again, "Fight those who believe not in Allah or the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden that which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the compensation with willing submission" (9:29). Muslims, of course, were forbidden from commencing hostilities or waging wars of aggression. As the Qur'an explains, "Fight, in the cause of Allah, those who fight you, and do not transgress limits: for Allah loves not transgressors. And slay them wherever you catch

them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not in the Sacred Mosque unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith!” (2:190-191).

In terms of war, if the enemy desires a ceasefire, the Muslims are urged to comply. As the Qur’an advises, “If they cease, Allah is forgiving, Most Merciful. And fight them on until there is no more persecution or oppression, and there prevails justice and faith in Allah; but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression” (2:192-193). Rather than repressing people, Muslims are urged to fight for the freedom of the oppressed: “And why should ye not fight in the cause of Allah and those who, being weak, are ill-treated (and oppressed)? Men, women, and children, whose cry is ‘Our Lord! Rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from Thee one who will protect; and raise for us from Thee one who will help’” (4:75). As Almighty Allah explains, “Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah, and those who reject faith fight in the cause of evil; so fight ye against the friends of Satan: feeble indeed is the cunning of Satan” (4:76).

As convincing as these arguments may be, many people, for one reason or another, may still oppose such a just concept of war. The Qur’an is lucid on the issue. War is a reality of life. Tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter. A Muslim prefers death to dishonor. A Muslim prefers death to slavery and subjugation. A Muslim prefers death to oppression and exploitation. Since humans are limited beings, they do not necessarily know what is best for them unless they are guided. As far as Muslims are concerned, the Qur’an is their guide and Allah knows best. As Almighty Allah explains, “Fighting is prescribed for you, and you dislike it. But it is possible that you dislike a thing which is good for you, and that you love a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows, and you know not” (2:216). As we have explained, *jihad* was established with the creation of the Islamic state in Medina. Although it is primarily a defense form of warfare used to defend Muslims from foreign aggression, *jihad* can also be employed to liberate the oppressed and establish justice. Thus, the nature of *jihad*, its reasons and purposes are clear. We shall now examine the details regarding the actual waging of *jihad* in Islam as expounded upon in the authentic traditions of the Prophet Muhammad.

If the Qur’an is the primary source of law in Islam, the Sunnah is the second. We shall now examine some authentic traditions in order to demonstrate the high level of justice and mercy found in the guidelines regarding *jihad*. It will be made manifest that

Islam is not the most barbaric of religions, but the most humane. We shall see that the concepts of discrimination and proportionality are more highly developed in Islam than in any other religion.

The concept of *jihad* is regulated by the principles of love and mercy. Islam makes a clear distinction between the combatant and the non-combatant. The principle of discrimination is expounded by the Prophet in the following terms, “Do not kill any old person, any child or any woman. Do not kill monks in the monasteries, and do not kill people sitting in places of worship” (Abu Dawud). Prior to dispatching his troops to confront the Byzantines who threatened to invade the Islamic State, the Prophet warned them: “In avenging the injuries afflicted upon us; violate not the harmless inmates of domestic seclusion; spare the weakness of the females; injure not the infants at the breast or those who are ill in bed. Refrain from demolishing the houses of the unresisting inhabitants; destroy not the means of their sustenance or their fruit trees, and touch not the palm.”

As a defender of human dignity, the Prophet Muhammad insisted that individuals who were convicted to death for committing crimes against humanity should not be tied up in order to be executed. As an opponent of physical abuse of all sorts, he forbade the use of torture and any cruel or unusual punishment. As the Messenger of Allah said, “The punishment by fire does not behoove anyone except the Master of the Fire (God Himself)” (Abu Dawud). He taught that the corpses of the dead must be treated with respect and returned to their families for proper burial. He expressly prohibited the mutilation of dead bodies during a period of time when it was the common practice of the polytheists to disrespect corpses. In fact, the Arab polytheists were famous for cutting off the noses and ears of the Muslim martyrs which they would thread together and wear as trophies of war. The Prophet’s paternal uncle, Hamza, had his nose amputated and his liver removed and chewed by Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan, and mother of Mu’awiyah. Regardless of the horrors that the Muslims faced, they were forbidden to lower themselves to the level of their enemies. Simply because the enemy commits atrocities does not mean that Muslims can commit them as well.

The mercy of Islam is made manifest in its law regarding the obligation to respect treaties. As was mentioned earlier, Muslims are encouraged to make peace treaties with non-Muslims. The terms of these treaties are absolutely binding. Even if an enemy of Islam were to take refuge in a territory under treaty, Muslims are forbidden to break the treaty. One such treaty was signed between the Prophet and the monks of St.

Catherine near Mount Sinai during the 6th year of the hijrah. The treaty is a perfect example of how Muslims should interact with non-Muslims. Following divine injunctions, the Prophet established the following charter with the Christians:

- 1) The Christian clergymen are not to be unfairly taxed.
- 2) No bishop is to be driven out of his diocese or bishopric.
- 3) No Christian should be forced to change his religion.
- 4) No monk is to be expelled from his monastery.
- 5) No pilgrim is to be detained from his pilgrimage.
- 6) No churches are to be pulled down for the sake of building a mosque or even a Muslim's home.
- 7) Christian women who marry Muslims are to enjoy their own faith.
- 8) If the Christians are in need of assistance to repair their churches or in any other many related to their religion, the Muslims are to assist them.

The teachings of the Prophet found in the *hadith* are brilliant manifestations of the mercy and justice of Islam regarding several aspects of war. Imam 'Ali, the fourth Caliph and the First Imam of Islam, applied the rules and regulations of *jihad* to the letter. Before engaging in battle, he would give his officers and soldiers the following instructions:

- 1) Never begin a war yourself. Allah does not like bloodshed. Fight only in self-defense.
- 2) Never be the first to attack your enemies. Repulse their attacks, but do so boldly, bravely, and courageously.
- 3) Do not waste your time praising yourself and your deeds. Instead of speaking about yourself, speak about Allah and the Holy Prophet.
- 4) Never chase and kill those who run away from battle. Life is dear to such people. Let them live so long as death permits them to live.
- 5) Never kill wounded people who cannot defend themselves.
- 6) Never strip naked a dead man for his armor and clothing.
- 7) Never cut off noses and ears of dead men in order to desecrate them.
- 8) Never take loot or engage in arson.
- 9) Never molest or outrage the modesty of a woman.
- 10) Never hurt a woman, even if she swears at you or hurts you.
- 11) Never hurt a child.
- 12) Never hurt an old or disabled person.

As the very embodiment of Islamic ethics, Imam ‘Ali meticulously applied the rule of discrimination in battle. During a combat, Imam ‘Ali knocked his opponent to the ground. Just as the Imam was about to kill him, the man expectorated in his face. ‘Ali refused to kill the man stating that if he did he would be doing it for himself and not for Allah. The man was Amr ibn Wadd al-Amiri the most well-known hero of the polytheists whom was killed by Imam ‘Ali after a while.

When it comes to its treatment of prisoners of war, Islam is one of the most merciful socio-political and religious systems. At a time when prisoners of war were rounded up, murdered in masses, or forced into slavery, Islam insisted that captives be treated justly, fairly, and equally. As far as the Prophet was concerned, POWs were entitled to security and protection. Not only could they not be put to the sword, prisoners of war could not be chained up. In particular, Islam’s treatment of female prisoners of war differs greatly from that of other codes of war. Instead of sexually assaulted, selling, and even murdering women, as was commonly done by polytheists, Jews, and Christians, Islam encouraged Muslim men to marry them. During the time of the Prophet, taking care of female prisoners of war was considered the moral responsibility of the Muslim community. The Prophet himself took his share of the responsibility by freeing two female captives and marrying them. The Imams of Islam also did the same.

The Islamic concept of just war has been and continues to be applied by all true Muslims. The Islamic laws of *jihad* were applied by the Prophet, the Companions, the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, and the Twelve Shi‘ite Imams. It should be noted that Iran is currently the sole Islamic state on Earth. Rather than embrace Islamic law, most Muslim-populated countries follow political ideologies and systems borrowed from the West. For the most part, they are merely remnants of a colonial past. It is therefore important to distinguish between Islam and Muslims on the one hand, and Marxism and Arab nationalism, on the other hand. It is equally important to distinguish between the true teachings of Islam, and the un-Islamic behavior of some misguided murderous Muslims.

Considering the Qur’anic and prophetic teachings regarding *jihad*, the claim that Islam was spread by the sword is an erroneous as it is slanderous. In fact, it demonstrates an absolute ignorance of the early origins of Islam. An ideology requires support for it to spread. The Prophet Muhammad was merely one man who went against the grain of his nation. He lived in a nation of alcoholics, gamblers, murderers, fornicators, and adulterers. He was sent by Allah to reform them. The Prophet was a single powerless person against a nation of degenerates. If you want to spread something by the sword,

you must first have a sword! Since Allah prohibited him from employing violence, the Prophet had nothing but the power of his preaching. The claim that Islam was spread by the sword violates the tenets of Islam and historical fact. If Islam was spread by the sword, which Muslim army went to East, Central, and West Africa? Which Muslim army went to Indonesia, a country with over 200 million Muslims? Although Egypt became part of the Islamic empire during the early days of Islam, its population was predominantly Christian for the two centuries that followed. Spain was a Muslim nation for nearly 800 years. Oppressed by the Visigoths, the inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula actually asked the Muslims to come to liberate them. While 20% of the population embraced Islam immediately after the liberation of the Iberian Peninsula, it took approximately one century before the rest of the Christians became Muslims. If Islam was imposed by force, why is it that Muslims are a minority in India, a country which was under Islamic rule for centuries?

One should study the history of Christianity before one criticizes Islam. Christianity was spread by the sword through much of the world. Can we ignore the Crusades, the Conquest of Jerusalem, and the wholesale slaughter of its entire Muslim population? It is reported that one foot of blood flowed through the streets of the sacred city during the massacre. Can we ignore slavery? What about the Spanish Inquisition? Anyone who was suspected of being a Jew, a Muslim or a Protestant was subjected to torture, sexually abused, and then murdered. Can we forget the Conquest of Peru and Mexico? Can we ignore the dehumanization of indigenous peoples? Can we ignore the treatment that Jews and blacks have received at the hands of Christians? What about the horrors of Christian colonialism and imperialism? As any serious study can confirm, the history of Christianity is written in blood: the blood of indigenous peoples throughout the world. As any honest assessment will establish, no other social system can compare with the justice, mercy, and love of original Islam. In short, one should not allow oneself to be brainwashed by the anti-Islamic propaganda unleashed by the enemies of Islam.

Drawing from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, this study has demonstrated that Islam is not the most barbaric of religions but the most humane. It contains the most highly developed concepts of justice, love, mercy, reciprocity, and discrimination between combatants and non-combatants. Since Islam forbids indiscriminate killing, the use of weapons that are, by nature, incapable of discrimination are forbidden. When it comes to Islam, the laws of warfare are clear. Hence, any individual who, under the pretext of

jihad, kills indiscriminately does so illegitimately and in clear contradiction of the Islamic laws enshrined in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Chapter 32

Malcolm X: The Power of Speech¹⁶⁹

The politically-charged revolutionary sixties, with its anti-racism, anti-establishment themes, brought forth a multitude of charismatic leaders gifted in the art of rhetoric, including masters of elocution like Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., Elridge Cleaver, Huey P. Newton, and Little Bobby Seale, along with Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown. However, out of all the fine rhetoricians of the sixties, one particularly individual stands out: al-Hajj Malik al-Shabazz, known to most as Malcolm X.

Malcolm X was born on May 19th, 1925 and was martyred in 1965. He was an influential African American civil rights leader who articulated the need for self-defense against white racist violence. A precursor to the Black Power movement of the late sixties, Malcolm X was born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska. The son of Louis and Earl Little, Malcolm became a rebellious youth after the death of his father who was brutally murdered for advocating the ideas of Marcus Garvey, the famous black nationalist from Jamaica. Although Malcolm spent a few years in a foster home, he became an excellent student and was even elected class president. His dreams of becoming an attorney were cut short, however, when his teacher told him that such ambitions were not reasonable for a nigger. Deeply disillusioned, Malcolm's life went downhill from that point. By the age of 14, he had moved to Roxbury, Massachusetts, a predominantly black section of Greater Boston, where he lived with his half-sister Ella Collins. It was there that Malcolm started to engage in criminal activities, eventually drifting to New York City where he became involved in Harlem's underworld of drugs, prostitution, and robbery.

While serving a sentence for burglary from 1946 to 1952, he studied extensively and was eventually converted to the ideas of Elijah Muhammad. Upon his release from prison, Malcolm became an active member of the Nation of Islam, a black supremacist cult, changing his slave name from Malcolm Little to Malcolm X. As a result of his studies in prison, and the thorough training he received at the hands of Elijah Muhammad, a self-professed prophet, Malcolm became the leading spokesman for the Nation of Islam to the outside world. Over time, however, an ideological split developed between Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad. While Elijah Muhammad attempted to

¹⁶⁹ This essay was the author's independent study for an English class at St. Thomas Aquinas Secondary School in Brampton, Ontario, Canada. As an early effort, it may rely exceedingly on the sources in the bibliography.

remain apolitical, Malcolm was deeply politicized. While Elijah Muhammad advocated the return of African Americans to Africa, Malcolm insisted in improving the conditions of black people in the United States. As a result of these significant differences, Malcolm X was suspended from his position as Minister in the Nation of Islam. After completing a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca in 1964, Malcolm X announced that he had embraced orthodox Islam, and rejected the racist doctrines of Elijah Muhammad. As a result, Malcolm founded a mainstream Muslim mosque and continued to publicly condemn the Black Muslim cult, accusing the adulterous Elijah Muhammad of religious fakery. As a result of his travels throughout the Middle East and Africa, Malcolm developed a more optimistic attitude regarding the potential brotherhood between white and black Americans. As an orthodox Muslim, Malcolm completely rejected the racist doctrines of Elijah Muhammad and expressed his opposition to the separation of the races. After several attempts on his life, Malcolm's worldly mission abruptly ended on February 21st, 1965, by assassins connected with the Nation of Islam.

Despite his death, Malcolm X remains famous as a result of his powerful rhetoric, a skill he learned from many sources of inspiration. Malcolm picked up some of his skills as a speaker by listening to Christian sermons, particularly those of his father, a freelance Baptist preacher. In fact, Malcolm was exposed to outstanding speech-makers during his childhood, a conditioning that definitely most certainly played an important role in formulating his future modes of delivery. As an avid reader, Malcolm X also learned a great deal through self-education. Despite the fact that he suffered from a speech impediment, stuttering, and reading difficulties, Elijah Muhammad also played a fundamental role in training Malcolm as a preacher.

If Malcolm X was a great speaker, it was primarily because he was an extraordinarily clear thinker. In fact, he was especially gifted at synthesizing political and philosophical ideas. A superior man in the art of speaking, Malcolm had a veritable genius for rhetoric. His fine intellect, and razor sharp wit, combined with the force of his personality, made him a brilliant speaker. A passionate and powerful person, Malcolm X seemed haunted, driven, and even captured by his own anger at the injustice that was suffered by his people. The tone of his voice and the style in which he spoke were subject to strategic control. Even when expounding upon intellectually elevated subjects, the content he conveyed was comprehensible to the most cynical, fatalistic hustler. As a result of his rhetoric, Malcolm provided a radical insight into the black experience in America. In fact, his rhetoric contains, very much, the stamp of racial conflict.

When comparing Malcolm X to other outstanding orators, we notice that they all share some common traits. The one thing that all good speakers have in common is the language they use. Good speakers speak to the people in the language of the people. Since Malcolm's message was aimed at the masses, he spoke to them in normal, plain, every day, unelaborate language. Although Malcolm expressed himself in highly intellectual terms when debating other intellectuals, he avoided complex and sophisticated vocabulary when speaking to ordinary individuals. The reason for this was obvious. Had he stood up in front of uneducated crowds of black people, and started to speak to them as if he were lecturing at graduate school at Harvard, he would soon have lost his audience. They would not have been able to understand him. Rather than connect with his audience, he would have alienated it. Since Malcolm X understood his audience, he spoke to them in terms that they could easily understand, speaking in the latest street slang. Since Malcolm X was an ex-hustler, an ex-con who had spent nearly a decade between bars, and was former hoodlum, thief, dope dealer, peddler, and pimp, the people of the ghetto could relate to him. Unlike other Uncle Tom blacks who belonged to the privileged class, and who benefited from the scraps that Uncle Sam tossed from his table, Malcolm X kept it real because he had risen up from the gutter. Black people trusted Malcolm as they knew he would always speak the truth, stand up for them, and never sell out.

A man of the people who spoke to the people in the language of the people, Malcolm delivered speeches which described the violent nature of American society. He believed that racist whites were at war with blacks in a cruel and violent conflict. Although Malcolm employed colloquial English, he never resorted to curses or racial slurs in order to get the crowd growing. Even when provoked, the strongest word he ever used was "hell." Even though he could come across as rhetorically rough, he never expressed himself in a tasteless fashion. Malcolm X was very much a man of acquired education, class, and culture.

Much like Jesus, who spoke in parables that simple people could understand, Malcolm X expressed his ideas through images and fiery rhetoric. He made especially good use of allegory and animal imagery for practical effect, a literary device he learned from his father and other black Protestant preachers. Speaking of white racists, Malcolm said: "Get the apes off our backs." Speaking of America, he said: "It used to be like an eagle, but now, it's more like a vulture. It used to be strong enough to go and suck anybody's blood, whether they were strong or not. But now, it has become more

cowardly, like the vulture, and it can only suck the blood of the helpless.” Speaking of white supremacists, Malcolm said: “You can let those hooded people know...those were...snakes. Those were twenty-one snakes that killed those three brothers in Mississippi...There is no law in any society on Earth that would hold it against anyone for taking the heads of those snakes.” On another occasion, he said, “If I go home, and my child has blood running down her leg, and someone tells me that a snake bit her, I’m going out and kill snakes, and when I find a snake, I’m not going to look and see if he has blood on his jaws.”

While Malcolm described whites in animal terms, he also used animal imagery to describe black people. He did not hesitate to describe slaves in animal terms, saying: “You came to America on a slave ship, in chains, like a horse or a cow or a chicken.” Denouncing the effort of whites to dictate the direction of the civil rights movement, Malcolm said, “They think we are savage animals here. They can’t tell us what to do, how to live. How can a cat tell a dog what to do?” When describing the slave mentality that African Americans suffered from, he compared them to caged lions. As he explained, “If a lion is in a cage, his roar will be different from the roar of a lion who is in the forest. But both the lion in the forest and the lion in a cage are lions. That is what matters. Lions love lions; they hate leopards.”

As Malcolm explained, it was often difficult to distinguish between blacks who were friends and blacks who were enemies. As such, Malcolm also described blacks in animal terms, saying: “I hear a lot of you parrot what the man says.” Speaking of his rival civil rights leaders, he said: “Our leaders...are parrots. It’s like running from the wolf to the fox.” Malcolm described the world as a jungle in which wolves, foxes, ferrets, snakes, and vultures, hunted one another. When Malcolm was being hunted down by assassins in 1965, he described himself as being in jungle, saying: “Those who would hunt a man need to remember that a jungle also contains those who would hunt the hunters.” In fact, Malcolm’s concept of society was based on two laws of the jungle: 1) The conflict between natural enemies, and, 2) the survival of the fittest.

As has been lucidly shown, Malcolm X was an outstanding orator. The language he used, his imagery, his metaphors, and his similes, were stunning. Malcolm’s tone of voice, his repetition, his pauses, and his stylistic flow made his delivery impressive. Malcolm’s use of humor for comic relief was highly effective. By gradually changing the tone of his voice, he controlled his audience like a conductor controls an orchestra. Malcolm’s shift from formal to informal language, from serious to funny, and from

general to specific, was also strategically superlative. In short, Malcolm X was a brilliant speaker and one of the most eloquent African American orators in history.

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Chapter 33

The Wisdom of Islamic Herbalism: Olive (*Olea europaea*)

The olive has been cultivated since prehistoric times. While its culinary uses are well-known, its medicinal applications, which involve the leaves and the oil, are less familiar, particularly outside of the Islamic and Mediterranean world. The Muslim world, however, has always revered the olive as a source of food, oil, and medicine. The full appreciation of the olive was the direct result of both Qur'anic and Prophetic guidance. The Holy Qur'an, on the one hand, speaks of the olive on numerous occasions, presenting it as a sign of God, and inciting Muslims to ponder upon its properties (6:99; 6:141; 16:11; 24:35; 80:29; 95:1). The Prophet Muhammad, on the other hand, lauded the benefits of the blessed olive tree that provided food, oil, and various internal and external medicinal applications.

The Qur'anic and Prophetic guidance regarding the olive was followed by the Companions of the Prophet, the Followers of the Companions, and the Imams of the Muslims. Islamic scholars and scientists, inspired by the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet, dedicated themselves to the study of the olive and its various medicinal applications. As a result, the olive became an integral part of Islamic / Unani phytotherapy and was indicated as an effective treatment for numerous conditions from dry skin to leprosy, and from hemorrhoids to pleurisy. Time, experience, and scientific studies have all confirmed the medicinal applications of the olive.

While the Holy Qur'an draws our attention to the olive, the Prophet Muhammad often focused on its practical medicinal applications, encouraging his followers to "Consume olive oil and apply it as an ointment, for it comes from a blessed tree" (Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, Muslim, Ahmad). He said, "There is olive for you: consume it and apply it for it is effective against hemorrhoids" (Suyuti, Muttaqi). He also stated that "You have the olive oil from this blessed tree: treat yourselves with it, since it cures hemorrhoids" (Suyuti). On another occasion, the Prophet said: "Consume olive oil, and apply it, since it is a cure for seventy diseases, one of which is leprosy" (Suyuti, Muttaqi). And, finally, Zayd ibn Arqam, has narrated that the Prophet used to treat pleurisy with *Kust Bahri* and olive oil (Tirmidhi).

As we can see, the Prophet Muhammad recommended the regular consumption of olive oil and its application, evidently to the skin and to the hair. He also said that olive oil was a cure for seventy diseases, and named a few of them: hemorrhoids, leprosy, and

pleurisy. Let us then examine the internal and external applications of olive oil and see how they confirm the wisdom of Islamic herbalism.

Internally, olive oil is a carminative, a laxative, and a demulcent. It is beneficial for treating cases of flatulence, as well as peptic and gastro-intestinal ulcers. It reduces gastric secretions which is beneficial to patients suffering from hyperacidity and acid reflux. Middle Eastern, Japanese, and North African doctors endorse the opinion that regular consumption of olive oil prevents incidences of gastro-intestinal carcinoma.

While it may be good for the gastro-intestinal system, olive oil is outstanding for the cardiovascular system. Olive oil is a vasodilator, increases HDL, helps prevent atherosclerosis, lowers the risk of cardiovascular disease, reduces blood pressure, helps regulate blood sugar, and has potent antioxidant activity (Zarzuelo, 1991; Samuelsson; Dept. of Pharmacology, 1994; Le Tutour, 1992). As a cardiotonic, it is indicated in cases of sexual weakness due to a debilitated cardiovascular system and diabetes. Olive oil is a good supportive treatment for diseases of the respiratory tract, including pleurisy and tuberculosis, and helps reduce incidences of the common cold, coryza, and pneumonia (Khan).

The benefits of olive, of course, are not limited to the gastro-intestinal systems. Both leaves and bark, for example, have valuable febrifugal qualities (Hanbury, 1854). To this day, people in the Levant treat obstinate fevers with a tea made from olive leaves. The anthelmintic oil procured from olive wood is particularly effective in eradicating ringworm and *T. versicolor*, and is used to treat fungal infections. When combined with other herbs, olive oil is beneficial in dissolving and expelling kidney and gall bladder stones. Mixed with parsley water, it is used to treat chronic constipation while on its own it is an effective diuretic.

Externally, olive oil is used to relieve pruritis, to soothe stings, burns, eczema, psoriasis, alopecia, mouth and lip ulcers, and dermatitis. In Cuba, research has shown the effectiveness of ozonized olive oil in treating herpes zoster, epidermofitosis, onychomycosis, chronic external otitis, ulcers, hemorrhoids, herpes simplex, genital herpes, vulvovaginitis, vaginitis, gingivostomatitis, keratitis, and other dermatological problems (Biological Oil). Applications of olive oil and henna leaves twice daily can help heal hemorrhoids while the concentrated aqueous extract of olive leaves and fruits is effective against dental cavities and leukoplakia in the mouth (Khan).

Olive oil is an excellent emollient. Grieve explains that “delicate babies absorb its nourishing properties well through the skin.” This is consistent with Imam

Muhammad al-Baqir's saying that "oil [applied] at night passes into the blood vessels and nourishes the skin" (Nisaburi). As a lubricant, it is valuable in skin, muscular, joint, kidney and chest complaints, abdominal chill, typhoid and scarlet fevers, plague and dropsy, as well as sciatica and arthritis. The leaves of the olive tree are astringent, antiseptic, and antimicrobial (Juven, 1972; Fleming, 1969, 1973). They are also smashed and applied externally to check excessive perspiration. Olive oil is also a good vehicle for liniments. It is indicated for dry hair and dandruff and is often combined with industrial alcohol to make a good hair tonic. It is also applied in eyes to relieve inflammation. The power of the seeds mixed with butter is effective for brittle nails. Combined with honey, the water extracted from the leaves is used as ear drops.

In Aztec herbalism, a mixture of annatto/lipstick tree powder and olive oil is indicated for the treatment of leprosy. In ancient times, in Greece, Crete, and the Levant, olive oil was also used to treat the same dreaded disease. In one preliminary study completed in Cuba, thirty people suffering from lepromatous leprosy were treated with ozonized olive oil. Four patients recovered, fifteen improved satisfactorily, and thirteen had to suspend the treatment (Hernandez).

While much research remains to be done on the medicinal properties of the olive and its potential applications, the present state of evidence makes it exceedingly clear that the olive tree, its fruit and oil, are a gift from God and an effective treatment and cure for a multitude of diseases.

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Chapter 34

The Wisdom of Islamic Herbalism: Miswak (*Salvadora* spp.)

The Islamic religion places a great deal of stress on cleanliness. The importance of hygiene in the Muslim faith is summarized in a famous tradition in which the Prophet Muhammad said: “Purification is half of faith” (Muslim, Ahmad, Tirmidhi). Considering the Islamic dichotomy between physical and spiritual purity, it comes as no surprise that the Prophet Muhammad would exhort his followers to observe proper oral hygiene as an act of devotion: “Brushing one’s teeth with *miswak* is a good hygiene practice that purifies the mouth, and pleases the Lord” (Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, Ahmad, Shafi’i, Nasa’i, Ibn Khuzaymah, Hakim, Bayhaqi). Imam ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, who followed in the footsteps of the Prophet, stated that “Recitation of the Qur’an, *al-siwak* [a twig of *miswak*], and storax are purifiers of phlegm” (Nisaburi). The Prophet Muhammad even came close to making brushing and flossing a part of the obligatory religious ablutions: “If I did not think that it would be too burdensome to my *Ummah* [Nation],” stated the Prophet Muhammad, “I would have ordered them to brush their teeth with a *miswak* before each prayer” (Bukhari, Muslim).

The miswak or toothbrush referred to in these prophetic traditions or *ahadith* is often fashioned from the *Salvadora* genus made up of four or five species of salt-tolerant evergreen trees found in the more arid areas of Africa, the Middle East, India, and China. The *miswak* is made from sections of the root. The bark is removed and the inner wood is frayed. It is then chewed and applied to the teeth and gums, serving simultaneously as both a toothbrush and floss. Several species of *Salvadora* are used for making the *miswak*, all sharing similar chemical properties, including *S. persica* which is commonly called Arak tree, toothbrush tree, salt bush, or mustard tree.

S. persica, like other species of *Salvadora*, possesses multitudinous medicinal properties, several directly beneficial for oral hygiene. The leaves of *S. persica* are detoxicant. They are beneficial for cleansing toxins that exude from infections. The wood of *S. persica* promotes healing. Both the bark and pulp of *S. persica* are anti-microbial (Almas, 1999, 1997; Al, 1996). Abrasions and cuts resulting from brushing and flossing, as well as canker sores, cavities, abscesses, inflammation, and infections, all benefit from the external use of its leaves. Research confirms that *S. persica* possesses significant anti-inflammatory activity (Monforte, 2001; Zakaria, 1998). An astringent herb, *S. persica* precipitates proteins from the surface of cells, contracts tissues, forms a protective

coating, and reduces bleeding and discharges. It is also an expectorant, encouraging the expulsion of phlegm from the respiratory tract. *S. persica* extract possesses significant protective action against ulcers (Galati, 1999; Monforte, 2001; Islam 1998). Its root and leaves are anti-parasitic. The regular use of *S. persica* may help prevent, reduce, and cure cases of intestinal parasitic infestation which are of particular concern in warmer climates. Research has shown the *miswak* extract is even more effective in removing plaque than Chlorhexidine Gluconate which is one of the best-proven anti-plaque agents (Almas, 2002). *S. persica* is indeed a “natural toothbrush” (Hattab, 1997).

Revealed by religion and endorsed by traditional medicine and modern science, the regular use of *miswak* made from the *Salvadora* genus is thus a complete and comprehensive approach to oral hygiene and a manifestation of the wisdom and validity of Islamic herbalism.

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Chapter 35

A Cultural History of Reading: The Pre and Early Islamic Period

Timeline

248 B.C.E.–224 C.E. Parthian Empire

224 C.E.–651 C.E. Sassanid Empire

570 Birth of the Prophet Muhammad

610 The Prophet Muhammad receives his first revelation

622 The Hijrah (migration) from Mecca to Medina

624 Battle of Badr

625 Battle of Uhud

627 Battle of the Trench

628 Treaty of Hudaibiyyah; Battle of Khaybar

630 Conquest of Mecca

632 Death of the Prophet Muhammad

632–61 The rule of the four rightly guided caliphs

661–750 Umayyad Empire controls the Middle East, Maghreb, and al-Andalus

680 Imam Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet, is martyred at Karbala

700 Campaigns against the Berbers in North Africa

711 Muslim conquest of the Iberian Peninsula

725 The Muslims occupy Nîmes in France

732 The Battle of Tours in France

737 The Muslims meet a reverse at Avignon in France

750–945 ‘Abbasid Empire

751 The Battle of Talas results in Chinese paper-making technology passing to the Muslims

762 The Bayt al-Hikmah, or House of Wisdom, founded in Baghdad, Iraq

763 Defeat of the ‘Abbasids in al-Andalus

792 Muslim invasion of southern France

859 The University of al-Qarawiyyin is founded in Fez, Morocco

969 The Fatimids conquer Egypt

975 The University of al-Azhar is founded in Cairo, Egypt

1004 The Dar al-Hikmah, or House of Wisdom, is founded in Cairo, Egypt

1038–1194 Seljuk Empire

- 1082** The Almoravids conquer Algeria
- 1095** The first crusade
- 1099** The crusaders capture Jerusalem
- 1144** The second crusade
- 1147** The Almohads overthrow the Almoravids in the Maghreb
- 1187** Salah al-Din wrests Jerusalem from the Christians, the third crusade
- 1200s** Mongol invasions of the Middle East devastate the Arab-Islamic Empire
- 1212** Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa; the Almohads are defeated by the Christians in al-Andalus
- 1245** The Muslims reconquer Jerusalem.
- 1453–1923** Ottoman Empire controls most of the Middle East, except Persia
- 1492** Fall of Granada in al-Andalus
- 1501** Safavid Empire
- 1571** The Turkish fleet is destroyed in the Battle of Lepanto

Introduction to the Period

Popularized by the British around 1900, the term “Middle East” refers to a historical and political region of Africa and Eurasia with no clear definition. From a colonial European perspective, the Middle East encompasses the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt, Sudan, the Levant, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Arabic speakers, however, prefer to speak in terms of the *mashriq*, the *khalij*, and the *maghrib*. The *mashriq*, or East, includes the Arab countries bounded between the Mediterranean Sea and Iran, including Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Kuwait; the *maghrib*, or West, includes Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania, as well as the Iberian Peninsula during its period of Islamic domination.

Although Egypt is geographically part of the *maghrib*, it has more cultural affinity with the greater *mashriq* with which it is usually associated. The Arabian Peninsula, including Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Bahrain, is known as the *khalij*. The Arabian Peninsula in general, and the *hijaz* in particular, is considered the center of the Arabic world as it gave birth to the Islamic faith. From an Arab perspective, Turkey, Pakistan, and Afghanistan do not form a part of the *mashriq*, although Persia, at least during its period of Arab occupation, could be covered by the term. Because this section deals with Africa and the Middle East, the region under study would be best defined by the classical term *al-‘alam al-‘arabi*, or the “Arabic world,” which covers all the traditional Arabic speaking countries.

From a period of illiteracy known as *al-Jahiliyyah* or the Days of Ignorance, when Arab cultural production was essentially limited to poetry, the Arab-Islamic world rose to represent the apex of culture and civilization and the champion of all sciences. The catalyst for this revolutionary transformation was the Qur'an, which commanded all believers to read. As a result of the advent of Islam, the preaching of the Prophet, and the establishment of all levels of educational institutions, what had previously been an essentially illiterate society became the focal point of cultural radiation throughout the world. The spread of Islamic civilization was further facilitated when Muslims learned the Chinese secret of paper-making. In the year 751, the 'Abbasid caliphate confronted the Chinese Tang Dynasty for the control of the Syr Darya, a river that runs through Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

After the defeat of the Chinese army at the Battle of Talas, knowledgeable Chinese prisoners of war were ordered to produce paper in Samarkand. By the year 794, paper mills were operating along the rivers around Baghdad, and paper was being shipped to all the major cities of the Islamic world. By the late ninth century, one hundred book and paper shops were said to be operating in the Waddah suburb of Baghdad alone. From Iraq, paper-making technology passed to Syria, where high-quality paper was made, and thence to Egypt, North Africa, and al-Andalus.

The transmission of paper-making technology contributed greatly to the rise of Islamic civilization, promoting writing, publishing, and reading. Muslims calligraphers and scribes no longer had to rely on parchment or papyrus from Egypt. With the construction of paper mills in Baghdad, book production blossomed into a vital industry. Translators, scholars, and tradesmen soon spread throughout the Near East and the Mediterranean. Acquiring, duplicating, and locating books became a new sector of the economy, and caliphs, viziers, and deputies of various provinces competed with each other in building their book collections in an attempt to attract the brightest scholars and finest literary talents.

The cultural production of the Muslim world was staggering with the libraries of al-Andalus alone churning out as many as sixty thousand works per year. In comparison, modern Spain publishes an average of 46,330 books per year. The Great Library of Cordoba, established by al-Hakam II (d. 852), contained four hundred thousand volumes, and employed some five hundred librarians, scribes, physicians, historians, geographers, and copyists. New materials were acquired without difficulty as titles moved freely from Byzantium to Baghdad and from Cairo to Cordoba by way of Venetian and Arab

shipping routes. The head librarian at Cordoba employed a female Fatimid deputy named Labna, who acted as the library's specialized acquisition expert in Cairo, Damascus, and Baghdad. By the year 1000 C.E, the libraries in al-Andalus contained close to a million manuscripts. This number stands in sharp contrast to the cultural production coming from Christendom, where the two largest libraries, Avignon and Sorbonne, contained a mere two thousand volumes as late as 1150, a reflection of the literacy rate in the western world. By 1275, however, Mudéjar merchants had established the first paper mills in Christian Spain and Italy, and by 1325, the University of Paris alone employed some ten thousand copyists.

As a reaction to what it perceived as internal and external threats, Muslim rulers attempted to consolidate their power by imposing official orthodoxies and limiting freedoms of thought and expression. As a response to centuries of Christian crusades, Muslims became increasingly radicalized, giving rise to dogmatic literalist movements like those of the Almoravids in al-Andalus. From a period of tolerance and pluralism in which Jews, Christians, and Muslims coexisted in harmony, the Islamic world moved to a period of intolerance and antagonism. Divided, and increasingly conquered by the forces of Christendom, the Muslims lost Cordoba to the Christians in 1236, Seville in 1248, and Granada in 1492. Eventually, many Muslim territories would be irretrievably lost and many others would be colonized for centuries. As Muslims suffered losses in land and literacy, western civilization commenced its ascent, eventually becoming the most powerful culture on the planet.

Reading Trends and Practices in the Pre-Islamic Period

During the pre-Islamic period, the Arabian Peninsula was a crossroads of cultures with the Sassanid Empire to the east, the Byzantine Empire to the north, and Abyssinia to the southwest. Although the Arabs were surrounded by sophisticated cultures with long literary traditions, the pre-Islamic period in Arabia was characterized by a rich oral culture in which eloquence reigned supreme. According to tradition, poetry had such a high status for pre-Islamic Arabs that the most famous pieces were posted in the Ka'abah in Mecca. Known as the *Mu'allaqat*, or "Suspended Ones," these seven odes or *qasa'id* were the works of Imru' al-Qays (d. 545 C.E.), Tarafah ibn al-'Abd, Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulmah (sixth c.), Labid (sixth c.), 'Amr ibn Kulthum, 'Antarah ibn Shaddad al-'Absi (sixth c.), and al-Harith ibn Hillizah (sixth c.).

The odes enjoy a unique position in Arabic literature as the finest representatives of early Arabic poetry. Besides the composers of the seven poems, there were many other

great poets whose works were well-known in the pre-Islamic Arabic world. The poets Nabighah al-Dhubyani (sixth c.), ‘Abid ibn al-Abras (sixth c.), and ‘Alqamah ibn ‘Abadah (sixth c.) were also very popular, so much so that they were sometimes numbered among the seven. Others poets, such as al-A‘sha Maymun (sixth c.), Thabit ibn Jabir Ta‘abbata Sharran (d. c. 540), al-Shanfara (sixth c.), and ‘Urwah ibn al-Ward (sixth c.), were known as *su‘luk* or vagabond poets as they would wander the land in search of work reciting poetry.

Pre-Islamic poets acted as historians, soothsayers, and propagandists, and were similar to the minstrels, bards, and troubadours of medieval Europe. Their poetry, or *shi‘r*, contained the collective memories of their tribes, and explored many aspects of Bedouin life, from the anatomy of animals to issues of honor and pride; from themes of solitude, love, and lust, to the troubles of tribal feuds. Moreover, much like the pre-Columbian Aztecs, and the early hip-hop movement in the United States, Arab poets would engage in lyrical battles known as *zajal*, which were filled with both praise of oneself and one’s ancestry, and mockery of one’s opponent. The city of ‘Ukaz, a market town just outside of Mecca, would host a regular poetry festival in which poets from across Arabia would exhibit their talent. Alongside the *sha‘ir*, or poet was his apprentice, known as the *rawi* or reciter. The function of the *rawi* was to memorize the poems and recite them, a process that ensured the preservation of the poems for posterity. These chains of transmission often continued unbroken for centuries, with one poet training a reciter to promote his poetry as well as contribute to the poetic tradition. Although poetry was recited, it was very rarely “read” as the pre-Islamic Arabs were virtually all illiterate.

Despite the fact that they did not actively employ an alphabet, the Arabs were not devoid of culture and their poets produced poems according to strict metrical rules. The few who could read and write may have been familiar with Thamudic, Lihyanic, Safaitic, Nabatean, Syriac, Greek, or Latin scripts. The first recorded text in the Arabic alphabet was written in 512 C.E. and consists of a trilingual dedication in Greek, Syriac, and Arabic. It is only one of five pre-Islamic Arabic inscriptions known for certain. The South Arabian script was used until around 600 C.E., at which time the entire Arabian Peninsula had converted to Islam giving the Arabic language and alphabet prominence. The few surviving pre-Islamic inscriptions in the Arabic alphabet, and inscriptions in the Nabatean alphabet that show the start of Arabic-like features, include a pagan prayer and religious, business, and military matters. They include an epitaph and curse against grave-violators, words of praise to a pagan god by a man who got rich, and a couple of

Christian dedicatories. They also include a long epitaph for the famous Arab poet and warrior Imru' al-Qays, describing his feats in battle; the record of a military expedition by Ibrahim ibn Mughirah on behalf of al-Harith ibn Jabalah, king of the Ghassanids, who were vassals of the Byzantines; as well as various names of people. Without an actively employed Arabic alphabet, the Arabs passed down their poetry and legends by means of oral tradition. It was only after the advent of Islam that the Arabs diligently documented their rich literary heritage, putting into print the poems and epics that had been passed down for centuries. The anthology of al-Mufaddal, for example, attempted to collect all that was remembered from pre-Islamic poetry as well as some material that was produced in the eighth century. The epic poem in praise of 'Antarah ibn Shaddad and the stories of Sinbad as well as other pre-Islamic legends were all recorded during the early Islamic period. Widely read and recited, the *Sirat 'Antarah* is believed to have influenced both Spanish and French epic poetry, namely the *Cantar de mio Cid* and the *Chanson de Roland*.

Reading Trends and Practices in the Early Islamic Period

The Qur'an and its Commentaries

Although the Arabic alphabet was used occasionally for religious and business documents, it was only with the advent of Islam, and the pressing need to preserve the Qur'an and the Hadith, that Arab culture moved from an oral tradition to a written one. The command had come from the Qur'an itself with the imperative "Read!" (96:1) being the first word revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an, which was documented during the lifetime of the Prophet, was the first book written in the Arabic language. Considered by Muslims as the actual word of God, the importance of reading the Qur'an is emphasized in many traditions, with promises of rich rewards for those who recite it. In order to recite it, of course, people--including the Prophet himself--would be required to learn how to read. According to the Qur'an, the Prophet was *ummi* (7:157-158), a term interpreted by most Sunni scholars as meaning "illiterate."

Although in its modern usage *ummi* includes the definition of illiterate, it also means "an inhabitant of Mecca, known as *Umm al-Qura*, the Mother of all Cities," "Gentile," in the sense of not belonging to the people of the Book, the Jews and the Christians, and "unlettered," in the sense of not having received a formal education. According to the Prophet's family, Muhammad could read and write in seventy languages. They always insisted that the title of "ummi Prophet" referred to that fact that he was from Mecca. According to many Orientalists, such as Maxine Rodinson, W.

Montgomery Watt, and Albert Guillaume, the Prophet was indeed literate before Islam, a skill required of any businessman during the period. In some Shi'ite sources, the Prophet is said to have been literate prior to the receiving of the revelation, although others argue that he became literate upon receiving the revelation. Although the literacy of the Prophet prior to the Qur'anic revelation is subject to speculation, the fact that Muhammad wrote and signed letters during his lifetime is sufficient proof that he practiced what he preached.

Appreciating the importance of literacy, the Prophet embarked on a campaign to alphabetize the Arabic world. The core of Muhammad's literacy campaign was the Qur'an, which continues to act as the primary text for alphabetization in the Muslim world to the present day. The Prophet's many sayings promoting education include: "Knowledge is worship"; "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave"; "The seeking of knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim, male or female"; and "Acquire knowledge and share it with the people." He also said: "Seek knowledge, even in China" stressing the lengths to which one should go in the search of science. The Prophet encouraged his literate companions to teach his illiterate companions how to read. Due to a lack of teachers, he even enlisted prisoners of war as teachers. So long as prisoners taught two Muslims how to read, they would be set free. Although the Prophet only ruled in Medina for ten years, he created legions of literate and learned Muslims who would rise to the most sublime of scholarly ranks.

From the time of the Prophet to the present, the minimum level of literacy expected by Muslims has been the ability to read the Qur'an. Instruction traditionally took place in grammar schools (*kuttab*), the mosque (*masjid*), the public school (*madrasah*), or, for the privileged few, the palace school. The pedagogical approach that was employed consisted of whole reading and memorization. For most students, the ability to read the Qur'an was the extent of their education. For others, the Qur'an was simply a starting point leading to every other science imaginable. While the elite continued their private education at the palace, the best and brightest students from regular society moved from the madrasah into prestigious religious seminaries and Islamic universities throughout the Muslim world. These included the Mosque of 'Amr ibn al-'As in Cairo, founded in 642; the University of Zaytuna in Tunis, founded in 732; the *Bayt al-Hikmah* in Baghdad, founded in 813 C.E.; and *al-Qarawiyyin* University in Fez, founded in 859 C.E. A multitude of universities were founded in al-Andalus in the eighth century, seventeen of them in the city of Córdoba alone. Other institutions of

higher learning included *al-Azhar* and *Dar al-Hikmah* in Cairo, founded in 988 and 1004, respectively, the *Hawzah 'Ilmiyyah*, founded in Najaf in the mid-tenth century, as well as the Nizamiyyah University and the Mustansiriyyah University, founded in Baghdad in 1065–1067 and 1234. Medical education was obtained through private tutors, private medical colleges, and public hospitals, whereas most trades were learned by apprenticeship. Besides grammar schools, mosques, palace schools, public schools, and universities, higher education could also be obtained by attending bookshop schools and literary salons, where teaching was done by means of lecture, discussion, and debate. Although the level of literacy may have varied throughout the Islamic world, it was exceedingly high in its cultural centers. In al-Andalus, to cite a single example, one would have been hardpressed to find a boy or girl over the age of twelve who could not read or write.

The Qur'an, as the heart and soul of Islam, was the book that was most often read, and which rapidly spread throughout the Muslim world during the caliphate of 'Uthman when it was first mass produced and distributed. Because Muslims pray five times a day, and each prayer requires the reading of short chapters from the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam is the most read book in the world. Besides its reading during ritual prayers, the Qur'an was read on a daily basis as an act of devotion. If there was a book in every home, that book was the Qur'an. Because the Qur'an is not merely read, but chanted, many works were produced regarding the rules of recitation. As a manifestation of love for the text, large quantities of the Qur'an were published in dozens of different scripts, including the *hijazi*, *makki*-, *mashq*, *'uthmani*, *ma'il*, *kufi*, *thuluth*, *ta'liq*, *nasta'liq*, *diwani*-, *bihari*-, *andalusi*, *maghribi*, and *sini*- styles. Copies of the Qur'an were calligraphed by hand on the finest paper and with the best of binding. The holy book of Islam was not only read, but revered, and all the best homes guarded an ornamental copy as a precious heirloom.

As the source of so many sciences, from theology to philosophy, and from law to linguistics, the Qur'an was not only read but interpreted, resulting in hundreds of Qur'anic commentaries known as *tafsir*. In the early Islamic period, some of the most popular commentaries included *Ja-mi' al-bayan fi tafsir al-Qur'an* by Abu Ja'far Muhammad al-Tabari-, the *Tafsir* of Ibn Kathir, and the *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* by Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti. Among Shi'ites, the most popular commentaries included *Majma' al-bayan fi tafsir al-Qur'an* by al-Fadl ibn al-Hasan Tabarsi, *Tafsir al-'Ayyashi* by Muhammad ibn Mas'ud al-Samarqandi, and *Tafsir tibyan* by Shaykh al-Tusi. Many

attempts were also made to critically compile the Qur'an in order of revelation. The writing of Qur'anic commentaries was limited to the learned, including both legal and spiritual authorities. Although these *tafasir* were read primarily by religious scholars and students, many of them became popular among the laity. Interpreted by scholars from all schools of thought, the Qur'an was at the center of a constant dichotomy. On the one hand were the jurists who advocated the literal and legalistic interpretation of the text. On the other hand were the mystics who advocated the spiritual sense of the text. Throughout Islamic history, Qur'anic interpretation has swayed from the esoteric to the exoteric like the systole and diastole of the human heart.

The Sirah, the Hadith, its Commentaries, and the Science of Men

Besides the Qur'an, educated readers from the early period of Islam were particularly interested in learning more about the Prophet, hence the proliferation of books on his life and sayings, including Ibn Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Allah, The Life of the Messenger of Allah*. Although many ancient Islamic books were lost and many were destroyed by the Mongols after the Battle of Baghdad in 1258 and the European crusades against Islam, including the fall of Granada in 1492, the foundational books of prophetic tradition have survived the test of time, which is sufficient proof of their popularity. For the Sunni, these include *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, *Sunan Ibn Majah*, *Sunan an-Nasa'i*, *Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal*, and the *Muwatta'* of Imam Malik, among others. For the Shi'ah, these include *Usul al-Kafi* by al-Kulayni, *Man la yahduruhu al-faqih* by Shaykh al-Saduq, as well as *Tahdhib al-Ahkam* and *al-Istibsar* by Shaykh al-Tusi, among others. Due to their encyclopedic size and expense, collections of prophetic sayings, their extensive commentaries, and works on narrators known as the science of men (*'ilm al-rijal*) were not within the reach of regular readers.

Islamic Mysticism Texts

The early Islamic period produced many Muslim mystics whose works were widely read. The imams from the household of the Prophet, who are mentioned in the initiatory chains of many Sufi orders, cultivated an Islam that balanced both its legal and spiritual aspects. One of the most popular of these works was the *Misbah al-shari'ah wa miftah al-haqiqah / The Lantern of the Path* by Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, the Sixth Shi'ite imam. Other influential mystics included Abu-Hamid al-Ghazzali, and the Andalusian Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 1240 C.E.), famous for his *Fusus al-hikam (Gems of Wisdom)* and *Futuh al-Makkiyyah (Meccan Openings)*. Although they were relished by Sufi

Muslims, many of these works were contentious and controversial, and were received with hostility by the self-proclaimed proponents of Sunni orthodoxy.

Biographical Texts

Besides books on the Prophet, early Muslims demonstrated in deep interest in the lives of pre-Islamic prophets, Muhammad's companions, the caliphs, and the imams of Islam. Books on biblical prophets, such as the *Qisas al-anbiyya* by Ibn Kathir (d. 1373), were widely read by all Muslims. The Shi'ites, eager to learn more about their imams, consulted the *Kitab al-irshad* or *Book of Guidance into the Lives of the Twelve Imams*. Unlike many traditional compilations of prophetic traditions, which focused mostly on compiling whatever sayings were circulating, many Muslim biographers were selective and attempted to separate historical fact from legend and folklore.

History Texts

Early Muslim readers were interested in both Islamic and world history. The most important history books produced during the early Islamic period include the *Tarikh* (*History*) by Abi Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 923 C.E.). Considered the "Herodotus of the Arabs," Abu al-Hasan ibn al-Husayn al-Mas'udi (d. 956) authored an influential world history titled *Muruj al-dhahab wa ma'adin al-jawahir* (*The Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*). A multitude of books were read by Muslims regarding the Battle of Siffin, the Battle of the Camel, and the Battle of Karbala, demonstrating a sense of distress over the Sunni/Shi'ah split among the early Muslims. From a single community, the Muslims had split into a multitude of schools, enriching Islam hermeneutically, but greatly debilitating it politically. Shahrastani's (d. 1153) *al-Milal wa al-nihal* was particularly popular, as it provided a non-polemical historical study of various religious communities and philosophies with reasons for their formation.

Philosophy Texts

The early Islamic period was characterized by its intellectual curiosity and openness to outside ideas and influences. Founded in Baghdad during the reign of the caliph al-Mansur (754–775 C.E.), the *Dar al-Hikmah*, or House of Wisdom, engaged in the translation and preservation of Persian, Syriac, and eventually Greek works. Within a period of roughly one hundred years (1150–1250 C.E.), all of Aristotle's writings were translated and reintroduced into the West. Translated, interpreted, and appropriated, classical Greek writings were reintroduced into Europe by the Muslims, contributing to the Renaissance. Besides the *Ikhwan al-Safa'*, or Brethren of Purity, the greatest philosophers of the early Islamic age were Ya'qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi (d. 873 C.E.); Abu

Nasr Muhammad ibn Tarkhan al-Farabi (Alpharabius / Abunaser, d. 950–951 C.E.); Ibn Rushd (1198 C.E.); Ibn Sina (Avicenna, d. 1037 C.E.), and Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406 C.E.), whose masterpieces continue to marvel to this day. The *Ikhwan al-Safa'*, or Brethren of Purity--a tenth-century organization of Arab philosophers in Basra, Iraq, the seat of the 'Abbasid caliphate at the time--were particularly influential.

Devotional Texts

Religiously minded readers from the early Islamic period were also interested in devotional literature, including prayer manuals and compilations of religious sermons and speeches. *Nahj al-balaghah* (*The Peak of Eloquence*) was particularly popular among Shi'ites, but also among Sunnis. Compiled by Sayyid al-Razi from earlier sources, the book includes famous speeches, sermons, and sayings of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib, the first imam of the Shi'ites, and the fourth caliph of the Sunnis. The cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, Imam 'Ali's *Nahj al-balaghah* has been used to teach the Arabic language, eloquence, and rhetoric since the time it was published. Considered one of the oldest Islamic prayer manuals, Imam 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin's *Sahifah al-sajjadiyyah*, translated by William Chittick as *The Psalms of Islam*, has always been popular among Shi'ite Muslims. The most popular prayer manuals in the Sunni world are the works of Sufi authors. They include the *Munajat* (*Intimate Invocations*) of Khawajah 'Abd Allah Ansari (d. 1088), the saint of Herat, and the *Dala'il al-khayrat* or *Waymarks of Benefits* by Muhammad al-Jazuli (d. 1465), the Moroccan Shadhili Shaykh.

Theological Texts

Not unlike the analysis of any of the world's great religions, the interpretation of Islam leads to divergences of opinion in matters of belief. As various creeds were codified, Muslims divided themselves into various theological schools. Some of the Sunni attempts to systematize the fundamentals of faith include *al-'Aqidah al-Tahawiyyah* by Imam Abu Ja'far al-Tahawi (d. 933 C.E.) and the *Ibanah* by Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari (d. 936 C.E.). The two most famous works on the Shi'ite beliefs include *I'tiqadatu al-Imamiyyah* or *The Beliefs of the Imamiyyah* by Shaykh al-Saduq Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Babawayh al-Qummi (d. 991 C.E.) and its correction made by his student, Shaykh al-Mufid Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Nu'man (d. 1022 C.E.), which is known as *Tashih al-i'tiqad* or *To Rectify the Beliefs*. Other important works on Shi'ite theology include *Tajrid al-i'tiqad* by Nasir al-Din al-Tusi and its commentary by 'Allamah al-Hilli, known as *al-Bab al-hadi 'ashar*. Despite

some minor differences in belief, all Muslims agreed upon the fundamental aspects of their faith: the oneness of God, the prophethood, and the day of judgment.

Texts on Islamic Jurisprudence

Although all Muslims agree on fundamental aspects of faith, they are divided into various *madhahib*, or schools of law. During the early Islamic period, Sunni Muslims followed the Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, and Hanbali schools of law. They also followed schools of law that are no longer extant, including the Zahiri school from al-Andalus; the Jariri school founded by Tabari; and the schools of al-Awza'i, Hasan al-Basri, Abu 'Uyaynah, Ibn Abi Dhu'ayb, Sufyan al-Thawri, Ibn Abi Dawud, and Layth ibn Sa'd, among others. The Twelver Shi'ites, however, had a single school of law, known as Ja'fari, in honor of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 765 C.E.), the sixth Shi'ite imam, who taught jurisprudence to Imam Malik (d. 796 C.E.) and Imam Abu Hanifah (d. 767).

In order to ensure the correct performance of their religious obligations, most Muslims referred to a treatise on Islamic jurisprudence. Among Sunnis and Sufis, books such as *Ihya' 'ulum al-din (The Revival of the Islamic Sciences)* by Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali (d. 1111 C.E.), *Zad al-ma'ad or Provisions for the Hereafter* by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 1350 C.E.), and *'Umdat al-salik wa 'uddat al-nasik (The Reliance of the Traveller and Tools of the Worshipper)* by Ibn al-Naqib (d.1367 C.E.) were part of a basic Islamic education. For Shi'ites during the early Islamic period, the fundamental books of *fiqh* or jurisprudence included the *Muqni'ah* of Shaykh Mufid (d. 1022 C.E.), as well as *al-Nihayah*, *al-Mabsut* and *al-Khilaf* by Shaykh Tusi (d. 1067 C.E.). The basics books of the Shi'ites also included *Shara'i' al-Islam* by al-Muhaqqiq al-Hilli (d. 1277 C.E.), *al-Rawdah al-bahiyyah*, known also as *Sharh al-lum'ah*, by Shaykh Zayn al-Din ibn 'Ali Shahid al-Thani (d. 966 C.E.), as well as many others. The Shi'ites, unlike the Sunnis, are only allowed to follow the rulings of living jurists. From the occultation of the twelfth imam in 941 C.E. to the present, Shi'ites have followed a succession of scholars in matters of jurisprudence.

Creative Texts

Poetry

Although the pre-Islamic period was particularly prolific in its production of poetry, the genre suffered a decline during the early days of Islam, a time in which religious literature was all the rage. Although it is unclear whether pre-Islamic poetry was repressed for religious reasons, Arabic poetry definitely declined, humbled in the face of the Qur'anic eloquence or due to a lack of audience. Deeply rooted in pre-Islamic

paganism, Arabic poetry represented a feudalistic worldview that had been uprooted. With its references to wine, women, and gambling, the Arabic poetry from the Days of Ignorance (*al-Jahiliyyah*) was antithetical to Islam. It was for this reason that the Qur'an said: "As for poets, the erring follow them" (26:224). Muhammad, of course, was not opposed to poetry *per se*, as he had his own personal poet, Hassaan ibn Thabit (d. c. 674), who composed poems in praise of the Prophet. The last of the bedouin bards is generally considered to be Ghaylan ibn 'Uqbah (c. 696–c. 735), nicknamed Dhu al-Rimmah, who continued to cultivate the themes and styles of the pre-Islamic poets. After the austerity of the first four caliphs, the excesses of the Umayyad and 'Abbasid empires created an atmosphere conducive to court poetry, with its emphasis on the *ghazal*, or love poem, the master of which was Abu Nuwas (d. c. 813–815 C.E.), who cultivated a poetry that praised wine (*khamriyyat*) and pederasty (*mudhakkarat*). While Abu Nuwas produced pretty but polemical poems that pushed the limits of what was acceptable under Islam, and poets such as 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Isma'il Waddah al-Yaman (d. c. 708 C.E.) and Salih ibn 'Abd al-Quddus al-Basri (d. 783 C.E.) were executed on grounds of heresy, others produced more religiously themed poetry.

The courtly culture of the Umayyad and 'Abbasid empires also contributed to the popularization of songs. Some of the famous singers included Ibrahim al-Mawsili, his son Ishaq al-Mawsili, and Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi. Although songs are generally viewed as an aural experience, they were so popular among a sector of society that they were actually published and read. Abu al-Faraj al-Isbahani's *Kitab al-aghani*, or *Book of Songs* (1216–1220 C.E.), was a particularly popular collection of songs by famous singers, musicians, and poets. Although much of the material was objectionable from an Islamic point of view, people have always been eager to be entertained. Besides profane poetry, the early Islamic period produced a wealth of pious poetry, typically penned by Sufi Muslims. Although their poetry deals with love and wine, and has been misinterpreted by most Orientalists as hedonistic, the Sufis emphasized allegorical language. They addressed issues of the flesh in an attempt to achieve transcendence with "intoxication" representing the mystic union between man and God. Rabi'ah al-'Adawiyyah, Abu Yazid al-Bistami (d. 874), and Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 922) were some of the most significant Sufi poets. Misunderstood by many, Hallaj was eventually crucified for heresy.

As a result of the rise of Persian and Turkish literature, Arabic poetry declined after the thirteenth century, although it flowered a little longer in al-Andalus where the classical *muwashshah* with its colloquial *kharjah* or final strophic "envoi" were

particularly popular. One of the most famous poets of al-Andalus was Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Quzman (d. 1160 C.E.), whose rhymed colloquial Arabic verse, the *zajal*, is sprinkled with Romance words and resembles the later vernacular troubadour poetry of France. The Andalusian poetic tradition, which bridged the Arabic world and the western world, abruptly found its end with the expulsion of the Arabs in 1492. Under the orders of Cisneros, the Archbishop of Granada, the corpus suffered large-scale destruction by fire in 1499 or 1500. Despite its public prohibition, Arabic literature was consulted in private by the *conversos de moros* and *conversos de judíos*, the Cryptic Muslims and Jews who had been forcibly converted to Catholicism, as well as Christian persons of culture. As a result, this suppressed Arabic-Islamic substratum continued to exert a subtle influence on Spanish literature, as can be seen in the works of Sebastiano de Córdoba; San Juan de la Cruz; Santa Teresa de Ávila; and Juan Ruíz, Arcipreste de Hita.

Prose

The birth of Arabic prose, as a literary form, is attributed to the Persian secretarial class who served under the ‘Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad. Popular works of the early Islamic period include *Kalilah wa Dimnah* by Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ (d. 757 C.E.), a series of didactic fables in which two jackals offer moral and practical advice, as well as *Kitab al-hayawan*, or *The Book of Animals* by al-Jahiz (d. 869 C.E.), an anthology of animal anecdotes. These works were exceedingly popular and appealed to a wide public readership. *Kalilah wa Dimnah* was translated into Spanish between 1251 and 1261 on the orders of Alfonso, one of the sons of King Fernando III, who would become known as King Alfonso X, the Wise. According to many critics, *Kalilah wa Dimnah* and the *Kitab al-hayawan* influenced European works such as Ramón Llull’s *Llibre de les bèsties*, the *Roman de Renard*, the *Fables* of La Fontaine, and other *bestuarios*. The *maqamat* or “assemblies,” a genre invented by al-Hamadhani (d. 1008 C.E.), are composed of fifty-two episodic stories about an unscrupulous rogue that poke fun at all levels of society. The genre was taken to new extremes by al-Haririr (d. 1122 C.E.). With his prowess for wordplay and his seemingly inexhaustible vocabulary, his *maqamat* are considered one of the greatest treasures of Arabic literature. These stories were highly popular among all levels of society and may have contributed to the creation of the picaresque genre in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain, including such works as *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *El buscón*, among many others.

The Thousand and One Arabian Nights, known in Arabic as *Alf laylah wa laylah*, is a collection of stories compiled over thousands of years by various authors, translators, and scholars. These collections of tales can be traced back to ancient Arabia, Persia, India, and China. The oldest remnant of the work comes from a few handwritten pages from Syria dating to the early 800s. The book is also mentioned in Ibn al-Nadim's *Fihrist*, which dates from the 900s. Clearly a popular work among the ruling elite, it was certainly equally popular among the common class. Although it is unlikely that lay people had personal copies, the tales were probably recited by professional story-tellers who traveled from town to town. These legends, and fables from China, India, Persia, and Arabia, were so widely read that they spread from the Islamic world into Europe, becoming part and parcel of the western literary tradition. Medieval Spanish works such as Don Juan Manuel's *El Conde Lucanor* and La Fontaine's *Fables* are filled with fictional material from the Muslim world.

One of the most influential writers from al-Andalus was Abu- Muhammad 'Ali, known as Ibn Hazm of Cordoba (d. 1064 C.E.), the author of *Tawq al-hamamah* or *The Dove's Necklace*. This was a popular work on the art of love that is considered a precursor to the *Libro de buen amor*, the *Book of Good Love* by Juan Ruíz, Arcipreste de Hita (fl. 1343). Although its Arabic original is no longer extant, the Spanish *Sendebär*, or *Libro de los engaños*, was translated from a popular Arabic book in 1253 on orders of Prince Fadrique, the brother of King Alfonso X. A misogynistic work dealing with the wicked ways of women, it was a phenomenal success in Europe. In many regards, it served as a precursor for works that protagonize "players" such as Don Juan. The rise of popular literature as a credible genre was fostered by a rising level of literacy in the Muslim world, made possible by the paper mills in Baghdad, which dramatically decreased the cost of textual material. Prior to the introduction of paper, works were published on papyrus, which is fragile, or parchment, which is expensive. With locally produced paper, Arab publishers could produce a high quality and durable product that was cost-efficient.

Texts in the Arts and Sciences

Scholars during the early Islamic period produced a monumental volume of works in all areas of science. As the Islamic empire expanded out of Arabia, and the Arabs encountered new languages, cultures, and religions, they were eager to learn more about the ways of the world. They produced books on foreign languages and alphabets; world religions, including Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity; as well

as studies of their scriptures. Readers had an abundance of books at their disposal, including works on zoology, ornithology, entomology, herpetology, botany, oceanography, metallurgy, physiology, agriculture, political science, sexology, psychology, architecture, apiculture, geometry, mathematics, algebra, astrology, medicine, pediatrics, gerontology, sociology, economy, mythology, weaponry, navigation, aviation, perfumery, chemistry, geology, and many more too lengthy to mention.

Some of the great scholars of the period included Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khawarizmi (d. 850 C.E.), a Persian mathematician, astronomer, and geographer, as well as Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi (d. 925 C.E.), the physician and philosopher who was possibly the first Persian doctor to write a home medical manual directed at the general public. Another celebrated scholar was Abu Rayhan Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Biruni (d. 1048 C.E.), the Persian genius whose experiments and discoveries were as significant and diverse as those of Leonardo da Vinci or Galileo, as well as the Andalusian Arab Abu al-Qasim Khalaf ibn al-‘Abbas al-Zahrawi (d. 1013 C.E.). Considered the father of modern surgery, al-Zahrawi authored *al-Tasrif*, a thirty-volume collection of medical practices. The works of Muslim scholars and scientists were widely read and distributed throughout the Muslim world, stimulating technological advances in all areas in a prodigious process of cultural acceleration.

Language and Linguistics Texts

As a language that had emerged from obscurity to become the official language of culture, science, and civilization from al-Andalus to India, Arabic needed to be thoroughly studied and duly documented. The first Arabic dictionary ever compiled was the *Kitab al-‘ayn*, or *Book of Sources*, by al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi (d. 791 C.E.). His student, the Persian Sibawayh (d. 793 C.E.), was the first to produce an exhaustive grammatical system, which has been the point of reference for all subsequent studies to this day. Known simply as the *al-Kitab*, or *The Book*, it falls just shy of one thousand pages, and is considered the Qur’an of Arabic grammar. Another work of invaluable importance was *Lisan al-‘arab* by Jamal al-Din Muhammad ibn Mukarram ibn Manzur (d. 1311 C.E.), the author of the most comprehensive dictionary of classical Arabic. Many dictionaries were written for specific fields. One of the most famous books in the field of botany was the *Kitab al-nabat* or *Book of Plants* by Abu Hanifah Ahmad ibn Dawud al-Dinawari (d. 896 C.E.).

Treatises

The treatise, or *Risalah*, was immensely popular as it was inexpensive and easily accessible to the average reader. Considered short and sweet, these treatises, or *rasa'il*, explored every topic imaginable from religious matters, anecdotes, proverbs, moral stories, and popular recipes, to prostitution and its pleasures, alcoholic beverages, dancing, singing, gambling, instructions on making cat calls, and how to impress women, as well as epistles on thievery and witchcraft. The writers and readers of these *rasa'il* ranged from scholars to simpletons, from the cultured to the crass, and from the virtuous to the vile. Due to their negligible cost, treatises could be mass-produced, sold for little on the street, in markets, and in bookstores, or distributed freely. Like other publications, they could be sponsored by individuals, religious seminaries, universities, or governments. Unlike books and encyclopedias, which generally required a patron in order to publish them, treatises were much like modern-day websites or blogs, which contain material that is both cultured and uncouth, and both legal and illegal. As a result, the authors of many treatises employed pseudonyms or preferred to publish their works anonymously.

Conclusion

Although the rise of reading and its effects on Arabic-Islamic society serve as a model of inspiration, its decline into illiteracy and ignorance is of equal interest. Although many factors contributed to the downfall of the Arabic-Islamic world, the fundamental causes revolve around reading. For example, during the early Islamic period, Muslim scholars were open-minded and outward-looking, absorbing and adapting ideas from all over the world in what was a living, vibrant intellectual system. Following the Qur'anic call to think and reason, an order repeated regularly in the sacred scripture, early Muslims exercised their rights to freedom of thought and expression, and Islamic civilization flourished. However, with the closing of the doors of *ijtihad*, or independent interpretation, in the tenth century, as well as the imposition of official orthodoxies, Islam moved from an open system to a closed one. Early interpretations of Islam were canonized and Islamic law, or *shari'ah* became stagnant. Rather than looking forward, Muslims started to look backwards, becoming a people of tradition, rather than a people of progress. Muslim educational institutions moved from education to indoctrination, rejecting novel ideas as threats to established systems and wisdom. With Islamic thought frozen in time, Muslims became increasingly unable to manage modernity and tackle new technology.

If the Muslim mastery of paper-making technology helped Islamic civilization rise to preeminence, its failure to embrace the printing press played a major role in its decline. Invented by Johannes Gutenberg around 1450, the printing press was introduced to the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan Bayazid II (1481–1512), only to be virtually banned for use by Muslims in 1485. By 1510, more than one thousand printing presses in the western world had produced approximately thirty five thousand titles, with tens of millions of copies. Using paper and pen to painstakingly reproduce books copy by copy, Muslim scribes simply could not compete with the European printing press. It was not until 1727 that Muslims started to use the printing press. By then, Muslims were three centuries behind the time; their level of literacy had plummeted, and their scholarly production had stagnated. Although the Persian, Mogul, and Ottoman Empires still controlled vast expanses of land, they no longer dominated the world of discoveries. From leaders in literacy, the Muslims had become followers. Soon, they would be subjected to western colonialism and the cultural cataclysm it would bring in its wake.

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Chapter 36

The Impact of Global English on the Arabic Language:

The Loss of the Allah Lexicon¹⁷⁰

Abstract

For over ten years, we have been researching the Allah Lexicon, a linguistic phenomenon which is unique to the Arabic language. In works like *The Allah Lexicon: Frequency and usage in Arabic* (Ohio University 2000) and *Arabic, Islam, and the Allah Lexicon: How Language Shapes our Conception of God* (Edwin Mellen, 2006), we demonstrated that the word “Allah” is the most common content word in the Arabic language. In some of our other works, such as “Arabic and the Allah Lexicon: The Loss of Culture in Second Language Acquisition” (2000), we studied how the spread of English contributes to the loss of Arabic culture. In “The Impact of Globalization on the Arabic Language” (*Intercultural Communication Studies*, 2007) and “Arabic Instruction in France: Pedagogy or Politics?” (*The International Journal of the Humanities*, 2007), we examined political attempts to subvert the religious dimension of the Arabic language. In a more recent study, “In the Name of Allah: Reverence Phrases in Arabic,” we examined the loss of the Allah lexicon among Arabic speakers in the English-speaking world. If our previous studies demonstrated a diminished use of Allah expressions among Arabic speakers living in the Western world, this current study, which is based on a survey of scholarly literature and a survey of fifty Arabic speakers, suggests that the spread of “global English” in the Arabic-speaking world has also started to erode this unique language feature.

Introduction

Language is a gift a people offer to themselves and their children. Within its myriad variations, language names all that can be seen and other treasures that cannot; it conjures up diverse names and descriptive expressions for feelings that exist within a part of our brain where language has no place. Even that is a conundrum. The human is compelled to communicate: from birth we listen, watch, sort and define in order to understand all that surrounds us. It is only through language that those elements that arise in a part of the brain where no language component exists, our emotions, reactions, and feelings, are given voice. The tongue finds refuge for all the mind’s thoughts, the heart’s

¹⁷⁰ This article, which was co-authored by my friend and colleague, Barbara Castleton, was originally published in *Global English and Arabic: Issues of Language, Culture, and Identity* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), edited by Ahmad al-Issa and Laila Dahan.

yearnings, and the body's functions within the limitless spectrum of the spoken and written word. African clicks, Asian tones, and the marvelous rolls of tongue, glottis, and nasal cavities, are just a few of the sundry sounds which have come into being in order that humans could share themselves, their world, and their ideas with other people. Language performs like the most talented thespian, taking on a myriad of roles in government, business, relationships, and spiritual devotions.

Just like that brilliant actor on the stage, language develops elements, skills and distinctions that slip quietly into our speech almost without notice. Economic changes, cultural variations, new inventions, and disasters all contribute to these new word forms. Populations across the globe adopt them at varying rates, and adjust existing language to make a place for the newer members of the lexicon. "Internet" and "cyber" are two such words. From northern India, to Morocco, to tiny towns in Mississippi or Michoacán, Mexico, anyone can ask for "Internet" and be directed to the nearest tech café or computer sales establishment.

Within the spiritual dimension, the retention of all the tools related to religious devotion requires that they, too, be identified, sustained, and passed on to the younger generations. The Prophet Muhammad, in his role as the revealer of truth, considered all these different levels of spiritual life. Islam itself asks for five prayers per day, special prayers in specific situations, the Hajj, and other doctrinal requirements. In his wisdom, the Messenger of Allah also focused on daily speech by promoting and encouraging a change in language across the board. The result was the Allah Lexicon, the duly defined, scientifically-sound name for this semantic field of Allah-centric religious expressions.

Fourteen years ago, when a Peace Corps volunteer taught English at a science and technological university in Morocco, she was met with students uniformly polite and willing but also frustrated by the need to learn yet another language. "We've already learned *darjah*," they would say, "and then classical Arabic, and finally French. All of our university classes are taught in French. Now, you are here to teach us English." And she was, at the behest of the Moroccan government, which had recognized a growing trend that has since erupted into what we call "Global English." Even then, as the internet was beginning to gain ground, but before internet cafés with second-hand computers became as ubiquitous as Moroccan coffee shops, foreign governments recognized that English was the language of science, social science, and technology journals. Innovation, invention, and research appeared first in English publications, later in French, and much later, if at all, in the Arabic language.

Whether one likes it or not, English is the most widely published language in the world. According to the latest available statistics from UNESCO, the UK, the US, Canada, and Australia combined publish an average of 400,000 English language books per year. The Chinese publish approximately 136,226 books per year while the Russians publish 123,336. The Spanish speaking nations of the world release an average of 102,250 works per year. The Germans and the Austrians publish roughly 104,000 books per year. The Japanese churn out some 45,430 books on a yearly basis. Yet, all the Arab countries combined publish a mere 15,000 books per year, many of which are in French and English.

If the number and type of books published per language per year is an important standard index of education, the English language has overwhelmingly become the language of culture, civilization, and science in the 21st century. As important as they may be, languages like Chinese, Russian, Spanish, German, and Japanese, lag far behind the English language in influence. Although it is spoken by 200 million people in 28 countries, and is the liturgical language of 1.5 billion Muslims, the Arabic language has long lost the privileged role it once had in the transmission of knowledge when the libraries in Muslim Spain churned out as many as sixty thousand Arabic works per year (Morrow, 2008, p. 523). Since so few books are translated into the Arabic language, and even fewer books are translated from Arabic into other languages, monolingual Arabic speakers are very much insulated from information that speakers of culturally dominant languages take for granted. In fact, for these Arabs, the door to anything newly written, whether it is in the area of literature, science, technology, or philosophy, is effectively slammed in their faces by their dictatorial governments. If one peruses the type of books now published in Arabic, they are predominantly related to religion, with relatively few concerned with scientific matters, literature, or international issues. This reality anchors Arabic, in the minds of Arabs as well as the rest of the world, firmly in the purview of religion.

As reluctant as certain regimes may be to relegate Arabic to second place in favor of English, the development of their countries currently depends upon it. For example, English is overwhelmingly the primary language of scholarship in the world; one can scarcely find a graduate program which does not require knowledge of English as a basic requirement. As Roy (2004) has explained in *Globalized Islam*, the English language has also become the de-facto language of political Islam. This state is not simply ironic, it is also one vehemently opposed by clerics who are limited by their single language fluency.

As Roy further commented in an interview, Islamic fundamentalists are a perfect paradox. They oppose McDonalds and the spread of the English language, yet they speak English and consume *halal* fast-food. As evidence that global English has become the dominant language of the global jihad, the number of English-language sites sympathetic to al-Qaida has increased to more than 200, while radical Arabic language sites have dropped down to approximately 50 (IMRA, 2009).

At first, students like those in Morocco might have shared qualms about abandoning either their first language, Arabic, or even their second, French, in favor of a third, a language best known at the time for being the tongue of the blind supporters of Israel and those nations that were politically antipathetic to the Middle East in general, and Islam in specific. Yet, as young people's cultural attachment to their first language faded in the face of expedience, perceived benefit, and a wave of mobile phone and computer technology, those voices, at first so vehement, have grown mute. The sentiments shared by Moroccan students are also shared by young Arabs throughout the Muslim world. As one young Kuwaiti graduate stated,

English is linked to openness and developed cultures, while Arabic is associated with strict rules and no freedom. So, of course I would be interested in English rather than Arabic. Arabic equals...no development, while English gives more chances to reach places other than home. (*Kuwait Times*, 2007)

His sentiments echo those of young men and women of ages and ages past, all of whom left home and language to go in search of work and advancement. "In doing so, they joined, willingly or unwillingly, a larger and broader culture, and their loyalties shifted from their geographically [and culturally] constrained origins to a wider society and idiom" (Tonkin, 2001, p. 6).

The Language of Prayer and Devotion

All over the world, people express their spiritual and religious beliefs in prayer. In many places, the language of prayer is also the language of everyday life. Other locations may have religious traditions so aged or from a source so distant that the language of prayer may no longer be in standard use. Formerly, Catholic masses in Latin were one example of this, as were Hindu services in Sanskrit. Whichever circumstance prevails, the act of applying an ancient linguistic instrument to direct communication with the deity provides a compelling connection. While writing on this topic for a US newspaper, Stephens (2000) observed that "speaking to God in an ancient tongue puts faith on a higher plane."

Talking on that theme, we will not debate the brilliance of the Arabic language, nor argue the intrinsic cultural elements that may disappear if Arabic becomes, as it seems to be, a language in decline. Our focus will be on a single gem from Arabic's linguistic fount. It is the language feature fostered by the Prophet Muhammad, nourished by a devout people, and one now being allowed to wane in the face of English as the world's lingua franca. Arabic has, at the center of its religious heart, the Allah Lexicon, a panorama of verbiage that extols the deity, comforts the suffering, warns the incautious, and, in short, communicates the supremacy of Allah in every area of life. These phrases, plus the original transmission of the Quran in Arabic, put this linguistic affectation into a sublime realm.

Arabs have historically considered themselves blessed that their communication with Allah occurs in the language He Himself used to deliver divine revelation to the Prophet Muhammad. This reality has led Arabic to be considered a holy language, one that, as Fishman (1996) articulated, is a "direct and presumably unmediated transmission [from God] or something very close thereto" (p. 11). For Muslim Arabs, unlike the followers of many religions, there is no intermediating language between themselves and their prayers or their culture and God.

As a result of the Allah-centric nature of the Islamic faith, the Arabic language has become saturated with Allah expressions. Some of the most common expressions from the Allah Lexicon include, *Bismillah* [In the name of Allah]; *Alhamdulillah* [Praise be to Allah]; *La ilaha illa Allah* [There is no god but Allah]; *insha' Allah* [If Allah wills it], *Wa Allah* [By Allah!]; *Allah yakhliif* [May Allah replace all you have used]; *Allah yi'awn* [Allah will help him]; *Allah yijib* [Allah will bring]; *Allah yasahhal* [May Allah make it easy]; *Allah yafarraaj* [May Allah take the burden]; *Fi amanillah* [Go with Allah]; *shukralillah* [Thanks be to Allah]; *Baraka Allahu fik* [May Allah bless you]; *Allahu Akbar* [Allah is the Greatest]; and *Subhan Allah* [Glory be to Allah], among many others, which vary nationally and regionally.

Thus, in addition to the name, Allah, the Prophet Muhammad himself actively campaigned to incorporate a vast collection of Allah-focused phrases into Arabic, thereby replacing a network of pre-Islamic pagan words and idioms. It must be stated that the Allah Lexicon is not a set of words and phrases used within the framework of formal religious devotions, but rather, they are multi-componential and bridge an array of every day speech, acts and situations. Our research has demonstrated that features of this Allah Lexicon are traditionally used by Arabic-speaking Muslims frequently each day to

remember their Lord (Castleton, 2006). In 1999, we surveyed native-Arabic speakers about their use of this lexicon and found a level of daily use of select phrases to number in the dozens.

Many professions and particular groups employ specialized vocabulary. For example, you simply cannot interpret literature without employing literary terminology. The ability to use precise technical terms are a linguistic form of determining whether or not one belongs to a specific segment of society. That is the nature of key words; they are essential to the communication of an idea. So, we believe, are elements of the Allah Lexicon, arising out of divine dictum and tradition. The frequency and near infinite occasions for their use constitute a body of “key words,” the lifeblood of any culture or belief system (Wierzbicka, 1997).

These Allah-centric expressions, the heart and soul of millions of Muslims’ interactions and communications, are now at risk as the parent tongue faces a powerful competitor. Just as Modern Standard Arabic gave way in many locations to local dialects of Arabic, so have both more recently seen the encroachment of another language altogether, English, which now boasts fluent and semi-fluent speakers of over a billion, making it the Walmart® of the language universe. And, like Walmart®, the language serves, supplies, and provides the basics in an array of situations. The drawbacks of this spreading lingua franca, however, should not be overlooked, nor its impact ignored.

In this chapter, we ask a series of questions in relation to this transition and its impact on the use of the Allah Lexicon: 1) What is happening to Arabic? 2) Are native-Arabic speakers aware of the religious history and intent of Allah Lexicon phrases in their language? 3) Are native-Arabic speakers concerned about the diminishment of the use of these phrases when they begin to communicate more regularly in English? 4) What is lost in terms of religious connection when the words that bolster that connection do not translate into the new language? And 5) What might it mean in terms of long-term religious attachment to children growing up in an English-speaking educational system?

Dorian (1998) posits that languages are “seldom admired to death” (p. 3) as she explores the various reasons for the growing frailty and ultimate death of any language. Admiration would seem to offer a guarantee of constancy, at least among the speakers of the language if not with the broader population of the planet. At the same time, “it’s fairly common for a language to become so exclusively associated with low-prestige people and their socially disfavored identity that its own potential speakers prefer to distance

themselves from it and adopt some other language” (Dorian, 1998, p. 3). For our purposes, this issue relates to the question, “What is happening to Arabic?”

The Problem

A language that arose in deserts, conquered lands, inscribed monumental literatures, revealed scientific truths, and the tongue that gave voice and form to the Holy Quran is fading in its use among the very people for whom it was long both a source of religious expression and beloved language. What is now occurring in Arabic-speaking societies and the realms beyond is a linguistic anomaly. Arabic, that near-sacred tool of poets and prophets, is being rendered an also-ran in favor of English, a language which neither supports the poetic traditions of Arabic, nor the devotional phrases that have added luster and spirit to its utterances and Muslim traditions. A Syrian Arabic instructor, working in the Middle East, offers, “There is a decline in learning Arabic in public schools now, especially in grammar and dictation. There is no love to the language and there is nothing interesting in the curriculums for students anymore” (*Kuwait Times*, 2008).

Certainly, this trend, of Arabs opting to use another language, has become more evident since 9/11, when American and Western hostility to all things Arab and/or Muslim resulted in thousands of hate crime incidents and a high level of suspicion toward anyone who spoke the language, all swarthy men who cultivated facial hair, or women who wore scarves. Annan (2005) diagnosed this bias and offered that, “in too many circles, disparaging remarks about Muslims are allowed to pass without censure, with the result that prejudice acquires a veneer of acceptability” (p. 4).

So rife is the American bias against those of Middle Eastern, Arab, or visibly Muslim background that many are changing their names to mask an unpopular heritage. Thus, two defining attributes, being or looking Arab or following Islam lead to discriminatory behavior on the part of functionaries, the legal system, and the airlines. In our own experience, many native-Arabic speakers stopped using the language in airports, out of fear that someone might believe they were plotting a terrorist act, a wise choice given the experience of Arabic speaking travelers (Williams, 2007). In short, many Arabic-speakers, even Westerners who have learned the language, refrain from its use in airports for fear of being profiled. Even written Arabic has become an anathema for some, as with the hubbub that arose when a passenger was barred from boarding because he was wearing a tee shirt with Arabic script. The Transportation Safety Authority (TSA) official who approached the passenger “equated Jarrar’s [wearing] an Arabic shirt to an

airport with “wearing a T-shirt at a bank stating, ‘I am a robber,’” the complaint said (Hazzell, 2007). Reported as recently as February 10, 2010, though the incident occurred in the summer of 2009, an American, Nicholas George, was detained, handcuffed, jailed and subjected to five hours of interrogation because he went through an airport screening post with Arabic-English flashcards in tandem with a politically controversial book. “Among the questions the TSA supervisor asked George, according to the complaint filed in the US District Court for the eastern district of Pennsylvania, were: “You know who did 9/11?” When he replied, “Osama bin Laden,” the supervisor allegedly said to him: “You know what language he spoke?” before she held up the Arabic flashcards and asked if George understood why they were “suspicious” (*Agence France Presse*, 2010). In both these cases and many others documented over the past nine years, the indictment was not against a threat, an action, or a movement. It was against a language, a language that is increasingly being seen as a detriment by those who were born to speak it. “Flying while Muslim” or “Arab while flying” has suddenly become criminalized.

Languages are said to be, “safe, endangered, or extinct” in addition to “moribund” when a language is no longer taught to the young in a manner that will leave them fluent in all skill areas (Crystal, 2000, p. 20). The stages of language loss are known, and, if looking at the first instance, that is, a diminishing number of speakers based on a decrease in population, we will find Arabic failing to measure up. The populations of traditionally Arabic-speaking countries are thriving. The regions of the Mediterranean, North Africa, northern sub-Saharan Africa, and the Gulf boast a combined Arabic-speaking population of 280 million people (Arab News Network, 2006).

Yet, Arabic in the lands of Arabs is going the way of Latin, at least among the urban and educated. The language is now in those telling initial stages wherein Arabic is losing young tongues to speak it. “Schools aren’t teaching Arabic as they are supposed to and most of what’s being presented to our children is in English,” mourned a vice-committee woman in Bahrain, as she and others attempted to push for a resurgence of Arabic in one of its homelands (*Gulf Daily News*, 2008). Across the Arab world, concerns are being voiced. Arab researchers and intellectuals have warned that the Arabic language is facing numerous challenges and threats, and that only the united efforts of Arab nations can help protect it (*Kuwait Times*, 2008). Another article from Bahrain gives further evidence of this reality. The Shura Council of Bahrain, one of the wealthiest Gulf nations, recently legislated that Arabic was the first language of the island nation.

Henceforth, all legal documents must be submitted in Arabic, with another language as a secondary option. “In reality Arabic is second to English, which shouldn’t be the case,” said one representative. “We have nothing against other languages,” he explained, “but they should be secondary, with Arabic being the country’s main language, whether in official letters or signs” (*Gulf News*, 2010).

The fact that English took precedence over Arabic in an Arab nation calls to the looming nature of the issue. The declining importance of the Arabic language among the Arabs themselves is ironic considering that language has always been the primary art form of Arabic culture. Other areas of the world had art or architecture, but for the Arab world, it was the grandiloquent configuration of words off a facile tongue that drew awe and attention. Hitti (1996) quoted a time-weathered ode to Arabic, when he wrote, “Wisdom has alighted on three things, the brain of the Frank, the hands of the Chinese, and the tongue of the Arabs” (p. 26). By honoring the Arabic language, Muslim Arabs honored the Word of God. Turning away from the Arabic language and script marks a major cultural shift.

As Fishman (1996) suggested before us, we will look at the insider’s view of the Allah Lexicon and these issues first, and offer up the outsider’s opinions and findings last (p. xviii). It is not without irony that this work is written and delivered in American English, a linguistic manifestation that owes its entirety to so many other languages and cultural influences that it evinces only a small measure of ethnic attachment, except insofar as “English Only” might be concerned. As such, native-speakers of American English have “no first-hand experience with the phenomena under discussion,” namely the loss of anything worthy in the face of language erosion (Fishman, p. xviii). The fact that most studies on the subject of Arabic linguistics are published in English, as opposed to Arabic, speaks volumes regarding the declining importance of Arabic as an academic language.

On two separate occasions, the fall of 1999 and the winter of 2009-2010, we surveyed groups of native-Arabic-speakers with regard to their use of the Allah Lexicon and their attitudes about English, Arabic, and their traditional culture. In both situations, for reasons ranging from access to the internet in order to send a response, to an ability to speak English in order to reply to the survey, our respondents were generally of the following demographic: 1) Predominantly male; 2) Urban dwelling if living in the Arab world; 3) Educated; 4) At least bilingual but often fluent in three or more languages; 5) Professionally employed or soon to graduate; 6) Interested in Arabic, English, and their

relationship as well as the issues arising out of the diverse cultures involved; 7) Predominantly Muslim, though not exclusively; 8) Most living in the Arab world while a few lived in Europe or the United States.

Naturally, a somewhat narrow band of participants poses some problems. However, since the results of this study largely mirrored those of the previous study, and since many participants are professionally involved in observing language use, the validity of the results seems all the more sound. With 54 participants in the 1999 study, we proved conclusively that the Allah Lexicon is in daily and moment to moment use among Arabic speakers, even those who, by virtue of a higher level of education, have had more opportunity to travel, engage with people from other cultures, and be influenced by the broader print, film, and internet media (Castleton, 2006). It is not our goal to regurgitate those findings, but rather to explore whether the continued use of the Allah Lexicon has been impacted by the greater scope of the English language.

The Study

Fourteen countries from the Arab world were represented in this study, in which we added data from ten representative participants from the 1999 survey and forty responding to the 2009-10 survey. Our participants ranged from 19 to 62 years of age, with an average of 30 years of age, and came from across the Arab world, including Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Palestine, and Lebanon, as well as Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Iraq. While most of our respondents resided in the Arab world, several of them were French and American citizens of Arab ancestry. Whether they lived in the Arab world or abroad, all participants unanimously described themselves as native-speakers of Arabic with advanced proficiency in the language.

First, we desired to establish English fluency among the participants. Over 83% of our volunteers described themselves as having advanced proficiency in the English language, 14% had basic proficiency, while 3% had no knowledge of the language. 90% of participants had studied the language for 7 or more years, 3% had studied it for 5-6 years, and 7% had studied it for 3 to 4 years.

Morocco and Jordan produced the most responses for the more current survey. This is not surprising, as both these countries are considered more liberal in their outlook and their national leadership has responded more strongly to any encroachment on the government's power to legislate and define the parameters of society. Morocco and Jordan have both had long-standing ties to the West, and thus to the languages of Europe

and the Americas. Perhaps as a result of these circumstances, respondents from those countries are less likely to be concerned about the “motives” for this research and instead, be open to sharing their personal experiences with both Arabic and English. By far, the most markedly concerned prospective respondents were Arab students at the Shi’ite Seminary in Qum, Iran, who, with a sole exception, believed our study might be a Zionist plot to destroy Arabic and Islam. The Arab seminary students in Qum, most of whom are Iraqis and Lebanese, with whom we communicated by email and through our representative in the sacred city, manifested a sort of siege mentality, which made them particularly suspicious of studies being conducted by strangers.

The one question we did not ask any of the participants was “How religious are you?” since that is a question that has tenuous value in terms of this language feature. While we are interested in any erosion in the use of the Allah Lexicon as Arabic collides and gives ground to English, we discovered years ago, though it will not surprise anyone who has lived in an Arabic-speaking country, that the Allah Lexicon is regularly used without regard to religion in specific. Christians in the Arab world use the lexicon, though, as one stated, “Christian Lebanese do not say many of the phrases...especially the ones such as *La ilaha illa Allah* as they are distinctly Muslim in nature” (Wajdi, 1999). Visitors to the Middle East, Gulf, or the Maghreb, if they stay more than a few days may find themselves, like a willow tree bending to the wind, beginning to pepper their conversation with *insha’Allah* [If it be God’s will], *wa Allah* [By God!], or *Alhamdulillah* [Praise be to God] (Langewiesche, 1991). Though created as a body of language to be used for the reasons stated earlier, the Allah Lexicon has become so embedded in the Arabic language that it attracts all speakers.

Findings

One of the first issues we analyzed was the frequency of use of 24 Allah Lexicon phrases. The results of our two surveys on nearly identical populations, as defined above, demonstrate marked similarities in terms of usage. The group from 1999 declared a use of 69% percent of the 24 different Allah Lexicon phrases in the survey. That is, they professed to use at least 69% of them on a regular basis. A caveat must be offered here, due to the fact that some phrases, such as *insha’Allah*, are used far more frequently than others, such as *La ilaha illa Allah*, which are more situationally specific. Despite 9/11, the negative press from some countries about Islam and Arabs, and the spread of global English, the results from 2010 were remarkably close, at 70% of the phrases in general usage. This demonstrates that, among those who still rely on Arabic as a form of

communicative address, the Allah Lexicon is holding its own. Although all forms of the Allah Lexicon are employed, the ten most commonly used Allah expressions in Arabic include: *Insha' Allah* (100%); *Allah yakhlif* (97%); *Alhamdulillah* (97%); *Bismillah* (93%); *Allah yahfadh* (93%); *Allah yafarraj* (90%); *Sir 'ala Allah* (90%); *Allah yarham al-walidin* (89%), *Allah yikhallik* (79%); and *Afak Allah* (75%).

Although Allah expressions remain an integral part of the Arabic language, our survey clearly showed that the overwhelming majority of these expressions were not transferrable into the English language. More specifically, the phrases can be translated, but the lexical environment where they may be used does not arise. If the use of Allah expressions ranged from 40 to 90% in Arabic, the use of Allah expressions in English dropped to as little as 4% among our participants. While some subjects insisted on inserting calqued Arabic expressions such as “God-willing” and “Thank God” into their English, virtually all Arabic speakers suppressed these sayings when speaking English to non-Muslims. In fact, 82.5% of our respondents insisted that the English language does not provide space and acceptance for Allah expressions. The existence of core cultural concepts that do not translate, clearly confirms the scholarly stance of Thorndike, Evans-Pritchard, Williams, Parkin, Moeran, Sapir, and Wierzbicka in opposition to the academic arguments made by Chomsky and Pinker regarding the universality of human thought (Morrow, 2006, p. 8). In addition, nearly 60% of the participants felt uncomfortable integrating *Bismillah*, *insha' Allah*, and *Alhamdulillah* into their English language speech, whether in their Arabic original, or an English equivalent.

Respondents noted, however, that while they generally suppressed Allah expressions when speaking with non-Muslims, they integrated them into their English when speaking to Muslims, which suggests the existence of a double discourse, a standard secular English used with non-Muslims and an Islamic English used with members of their own community. This could be likened to the formalized Japanese speech based on a cultural belief of the sanctity and respect due to elders and those of higher rank. The Japanese language forged these beliefs in an intricate social design that, even today, reinforces this attitude at every level of interaction and follows it up with respectful movement, eye contact (or lack of), and so forth. Yet, the Japanese are prepared to forego these linguistic and physical demands when engaged with people from another culture, precisely because those people are from a different culture, and the Japanese want to honor their foreign counterparts' distinct set of beliefs. Nevertheless, religious honorifics are not presented in the Quran as choices, but as requirements,

perhaps not quite as elevated as the pillars of Islam, but certainly with an implication of importance.

Still, when we examine the Allah expressions that these Arabs use when speaking English to Muslims, we find that they are not unique Arabic expressions being integrated into English: they are simply parallel expressions which are shared by both languages. According to our statistics, the cognitive suppression of Allah expressions ranges from 57% to 93.5% of those used. The only Allah expressions that Arabs integrate into English, at a rate of 66.5% of the time, are “God willing,” “God help you,” “God bless you,” “May God reward you,” and “May God give you good health,” all expressions that already exist in English. While these expressions are not nearly as common in English as they are in Arabic, they are standard phrases, and can be integrated without sounding too strange or alien. Idiomatically untranslatable and awkward Allah expressions like “May God fix”, “May God have mercy on your parents”, “Go with God”, “May God heal”, “May God remove your burden”, “God will bring you what you need”, “May God replace”, are consequently rarely used in English.

One of the ironies that came to light in this research is that, although most of our respondents repress Allah expressions when they speak English, 80% of them viewed the phrases as essential to their Arab/Muslim persona. This presents something of a paradox. Why is it that what is considered essential in Arabic is so easy to release in English? While we did not ask volunteers for information regarding their degree of religiosity, it can be assumed that the 20% of Arabs who did not view Allah expressions as essential were more secular-minded. Despite the fact that 80% of our respondents regarded the Allah Lexicon as essential to their Arabic-Islamic identity, only 50% of them reported that their children employed these expressions as often as the parents did, suggesting a generational decline in the use of religious expressions. Children will not embed linguistic patterns if they are not encouraged to and/or if they stop hearing the phrases at the same level previous generations may have due to the distractions and immediacy of alternate media. Considering the fact that 85% of the volunteer participants believed that the use of Allah expressions increases God-consciousness, and then find the youth not as attached to these words, seems to indicate the degree of devotion to the Islamic faith, as evidenced by verbal expression, may be in decline among young Arab Muslims. Conversely, only 37.5% of our respondents believed that a reduced use of the Allah Lexicon indicated less religious devotion. Although these responses may seem contradictory, they may be reconciled to a certain extent. It would appear that for many

Arabic-speaking Muslims, the use of Allah expressions is a type of *dhikr* or mantra, one which helps bring people closer to God. Merely because one does not invoke God perpetually, however, does not necessarily mean that one is less devoted to Islam. One may still be a pious Muslim. After all, most Muslims do not speak Arabic, and may use few, if any, examples from the lexicon. Without a doubt, we are focusing on Arabic-speaking Muslims, who, historically, have had the double bond of language and religion.

The attitude of our respondents towards the Arabic language was unanimously positive and optimistic. Over 93% of participants felt that Arabic played a valuable role in their lives. As many expressed, they viewed the Arabic language as central to their identity, be it Arab or Islamic. Approximately 80% of our volunteers were optimistic about the future of the Arabic language, while the other 20% was pessimistic. Even the more encouraged among the respondents admitted that the Arabic language was facing problems. Still, they believed it had a bright future, that it was spreading throughout the world, and that it would live forever. They considered that the increased attention that the Arab culture and Islam were receiving would bode well for Arabic as a viable language of the future. Some especially enthusiastic respondents believed that Arabic was making a come-back worldwide, and would remain the language of not only the Arab world, but of the Muslim world as whole. Others insisted that the future of Arabic was firmly linked to the future of Islam. Many others commented that Arabic would continue to prosper and flourish in the future.

Pessimistic contributors pointed out that the Arabic language was declining in countries like the UAE, which is subject to strong Western influence. They feared that the language was endangered by both the hegemony of other languages and the negative attitude of some of its own speakers. Some believed that Modern Standard Arabic would continue to lose ground at home, while spreading globally for religious and economic reasons; whereas, the colloquial dialects would continue to becoming increasingly contaminated by French and English borrowings. Several volunteers described the Arabic language as “threatened”, and “endangered.” Others believed that Modern Standard Arabic will go the way of Latin, and become merely a language of limited use relegated to religious and literary realms.

The attitude of our respondents towards the English language was almost entirely positive. For every one, it was merely another means of communication, one that was becoming increasingly important in a globalized world. While many Arabs may be averse to the negative aspects of globalization, they have no problem with the English language

per se. In short, nationalistic attempts to outlaw or limit the use of the English language, as have taken place in Quebec, would probably find little support in the Arab world.

Overall, the impact of the English language on Arabic speakers can be clearly gauged by these results. A full 50% of participants indicated that they used English extensively on a daily basis, while another 14% used it sporadically on a daily basis. In fact, respondents living in Arab countries reported that they listened to English-language media nearly as much as they listened to Arabic-language media. For many participants, opting for English as opposed to Arabic was related to issues of content and comprehension. Many turned to English language media in an attempt to obtain a more balanced perspective on world events. For others, following the news in English was far more facile than following it in Modern Standard Arabic, the choice of the Arabic audio media. Such comments are curious since our respondents were almost exclusively university students and professors, all of whom were perfectly proficient in MSA. If even educated speakers of Arabic found it tiring to listen to *al-lughah al-'arabiyyah al-fasihah*, it makes us wonder the degree of difficulty and even despair the uneducated *'amiyyah* or dialect speakers must face when trying to follow the news on television.

Thus, while Arabic remains strongly-rooted in much of the Arab world, 65% of our respondents explained that English has taken precedence over Arabic in the realm of commerce, while 47.5% remarked that English has taken precedence over Arabic in their national educational systems. In his study on the spread of global English in Singapore, Viniti (2008) found that English dominated Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil in the public and educational domains, that it competed with them in the domain of family, friends, and the media, and that the native languages dominated English only in the domain of religion. According to his findings, religion now plays a major role in retaining native languages and acquiring knowledge of sacred languages such as Arabic. One can only wonder if English will become the global language of business and education in the Arab world, relegating colloquial Arabic to the family kitchen and classical Arabic to the mosque.

Rather than resent the spread of English, 100% of respondents believed that English played a valuable role in their lives. This is a remarkable finding considering that 93% of them believed that Arabic also played a valuable role in their lives. It seems that, for at least 7% of respondents, the English language is of more value to them than their mother tongue, due to the fact that they depend on English for their sustenance and career advancement. As numerous volunteers explained, they did not view English as a British

or American language: they view it as an international language of communication. Some 37.5% of respondents believed that the spread of English in the Arabic world would lead to an Arabization and Islamization of the English language. This aspiration may appear to be misplaced optimism given the state of international politics. Yet, there is a courageous hope in this response, one that speaks to the belief in the power of one language to influence another. Certainly, English has adopted thousands of words from other languages over the last 1000 years. While half of Arabic speaking Muslims believed that English could be Islamized, 70% believed that the Arabic language could not be secularized.

The idea that Arabic is a sacred language seems to be deeply ingrained in the Arabic-Islamic mindset. As was demonstrated in “The Omnipresence of Allah in the Arabic Language”, Muslim languages like Persian, Turkish, Urdu, and Malaysian have only been superficially Islamized when compared to Arabic (Morrow, 2006, p. 7-70). Attempts by Muslim converts from the West to “Islamize” English have thus far failed. The Allah expressions and Arabic terms they include in their English use are only marginally significant when compared to the whole. The sole exception to this fact seems to be the Aljamiado Spanish of the Moriscos which is so saturated with Arabic Allah expressions and religious terminology that several scholars describe it as “an Islamic variant of Spanish” (Gómez Renau, 2000; Hegyi, 1985; Sánchez Álvarez, 1988).

In our most recent survey, it was equally important to determine the extent to which the Arabic language was being passed down to the next generation, thereby providing a platform for speculating on the many upcoming generations. As we have already noted, 50% of Arab speaking parents have observed that their children use fewer Allah expressions than they do. In fact, only 60% of our respondents said their children could speak Arabic, 47% could write Arabic, and 53% could read it. In contrast, 50% of our respondents reported that their children could speak English, and 57% reported that they could read and write it. It would advance our understanding of the younger generation’s attachment to Arabic if we knew whether they were being taught in Arabic at school or in English. This last issue is shown to be a proliferating pattern based on the current media evidence we gathered and discussed earlier. The data from our survey indicates that our respondents, all adults, did not themselves belong to the English-educated Arab elite. The vast majority of them had been schooled in Arabic at the elementary, secondary, and university levels. If these parents are already noting a decline in the use of Arabic Allah expressions, and even cases of Arabic attrition among their

children, one can only wonder the extent of language loss occurring among the children of the English-educated products of the private schools that are well nigh ubiquitous in some parts of the Arab world. If our results are indicative, Arab parents are presently producing the first fully bilingual generation of Arabic/English speakers. However, with the dominance of English, Arab children may be entirely and exclusively Anglicized in generations to come.

While exposure to English varies greatly throughout the Arab world, there has been an increase in the spread of English-language schools and English-language instruction in North Africa and the Middle East. Despite the French government's paternalistic attitude towards its ex-colonies and its fears about a decline in the use of French, many countries in the Maghreb are now focusing on English as opposed to French. Algeria, in a foresighted move, left the *francophonie*, dropped French as an official language, removed it from the school system, and replaced it with Arabic and English. Although the relationship between Morocco and France has often been sour, Morocco has always had excellent relations with the US. Like Algeria, Morocco is determined to drop the use of French and replace it with English instruction. However, because it receives "French language support" funds from the French government, it may be a while before the change is fully implemented. Tunisia, like Algeria and Morocco, has moved away from the ambitious Arabization plans of the past, and is, instead, embracing a policy of Anglicization through education. The Arabization plans have been dropped in most Arab countries for a long host of reasons, including, the political failure of Pan-Arabism, the discouragingly deep divide between Arabic dialects and MSA, and the ever increasing need to communicate in English, the current language of political and economic power.

In Egypt, a former British colony, knowledge of English has always been encouraged. In Lebanon, where French was once the language of prestige, English has become the "cool", contemporary, and most modern language for today's youth. In countries like Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, English has become the unofficial second language. In fact, English is so dominant in Dubai that lawmakers felt obliged to declare Arabic as the official language in the UAE in 2008. As Kitbi, Professor of Political Science at Al-Ain University noted, "To my knowledge, there is no nation that allows an invasion of foreign languages in government institutions the way we did in the UAE. The move [naming Arabic as the official language] will correct the imbalance" (Tristram, 2008, p.1). Despite this symbolic gesture, English remains the overwhelmingly

dominant language in the UAE Although Arabic is the language of public education, English is strongly stressed.

The primary language in most private schools throughout the Arab world is English, a fact that is, year after year, producing new generations of Arabs who, while they speak colloquial Arabic, have little or no comprehension of MSA, and cannot even read or write the language (Gawab, 2010). One generation back, and thence ages and ages past, the ancestors of these young people could all read the Quran, even if they read nothing else. In Islamic Spain, for example, there was scarcely a boy or girl over the age of twelve who could not read or write Arabic (Morrow, 2008). Becoming proficient was considered a duty as well as a privilege. While it is not unusual for language attrition to occur among emigrants, it is highly unusual for a situation like this to develop, where individuals lose a language while still living in the birthplace of that language. Rather than attempt to communicate in Arabic, many young Arabs have succumbed to the easy appeal of the English language.

One manifestation that we have noted personally among children raised in the US of Arabic speaking parents is that when the children are very young and Arabic is the language of the home, they come to understand and respond automatically to communications verbalized by their parents or other Arabic-speaking family members. When they are older, however, and have begun attending a preschool or kindergarten, where the spoken language is English, the easy fluency of their first years dissipates somewhat as English, or any other language in its place, comes to be seen as “dominant” and “more useful.” It is then that a linguistic tug of war begins. It is not a war in which there will necessarily be one victor. In bilinguals, what will happen is that the speaker will begin “code switching.” Code switching is a process in which, while speaking one language, the speaker will insert a word from his or her second language, in effect substituting one language for another (Heredia & Altarriba, 2001 p. 164). Language dominance would then be determined by which language is the language of “flow” and which one is the language of “insertion.”

The results we have received from our respondents clearly confirm the growing influence of the English language in the educational system throughout the Arab world. A question about the language of instruction employed at the elementary, secondary, and university levels in their respective home countries provided the following picture:

Language	Elementary	Secondary	University
Arabic	34	30	12
English	8	12	21
French	4	3	4

It is evident that, in many Arab countries, elementary, secondary, and university education is bilingual, either Arabic-French or Arabic-English. What is interesting is the exponential increase of English, as opposed to French, usage, from the time many Arabs are children to the time they are university students, and the significant decrease in Arabic language instruction. The use of Arabic declines from one third, while the use of English increases nearly three-fold. As numerous participants pointed out, while Arabic may remain the language of instruction in public schools, English is the language of instruction in private schools. Increasingly, English is a language of privilege in the Arab world, one which may contribute to a more profoundly disparate class system than mere money might allow. Since many specialized fields of study are taught exclusively in English in Arab universities, Arab children who completed their studies in private English-language schools, find themselves at a distinct advantage over their poorer peers from the public school system. These elite, English-speaking Arab students, may well enter engineering and medical programs, while their economically disadvantaged monolingual peers, end up in economically unprofitable fields, such as Islamic Studies or Arabic literature.

The question of how this situation has arisen remains a conundrum. Although we assumed that the decline in MSA usage was attributed to poor pedagogical approaches, we were surprised to find that 45% of respondents believed the materials and resources used to teach Arabic to Arabs were good. Another 31% found them to be excellent, and 21% considered the books, media, and instruction to be of fair quality. Only 3.5% of respondents viewed the material as pedagogically poor. Coincidentally, 63% of respondents rejected the notion that studying MSA was both boring and difficult. Those who did find it dull blamed the textbooks used to teach it, in addition to great difficulty due to the difference between their colloquial dialects spoken at home and MSA. Still, when asked to compare the method used to teach English and the method used to teach

Arabic, 60% of respondents described English as being more appealing. This response may point to the more modern approach used to teach English. It relies more on communicative methods and less repetition than the traditional method used to teach MSA. As far as our participants were concerned in relation to the materials used to teach English in the Arab world, 47.5% viewed them as good while 25% viewed them as excellent. Another 20% opined that the English textbooks were poor and 7.5% found them fair. When asked whether Modern Standard Arabic should be the main language of instruction in the Arabic speaking world, 80% of respondents responded affirmatively, while 20% argued that the language of instruction should be colloquial Arabic. When asked whether English should be the main language of instruction, 95% of participants rejected the idea.

The results from our survey stand in sharp contrast from those presented by al-Abed and Oqlah (1996). Their survey of 1,176 undergraduate students in Saudi Arabia concluded that English does not spread Westernization, does not weaken national identity, and does not corrupt religious commitment. If we are to believe their results, most university students in Saudi Arabia believe that learning English is both a religious and national duty. As a result of their findings, the researchers recommended that a rigid English language policy be implemented in the Kingdom. Objectively, given the responses we have received from a wide range of Arabic speakers, it is difficult to believe that Saudis view learning English as a religious obligation versus an economic or cultural advantage. The Prophet taught Muslims to “seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave”, yet, not all knowledge leads to wisdom. Thus, to take on a language like English, one that is profoundly secular and brings with it a world of controversial ideas, overt sexuality being the least of them, as a religious obligation, begs intense reflection and understanding. We have pointed out that even those who are briefly in an Arabic speaking country will find themselves, without conscious thought, utilizing the more common Allah phrases. Who, then, can learn English without learning all that comes along with it?

When we embarked on this socio-linguistic mission, we sought to determine whether the spread of global English would lead to the de-Islamization of the Arabic language. As evidence of the decline of Allah expressions observed in previous studies by Ferguson (1983) and Morrow (2006), 52.5% of respondents believe that global English is eroding Arabic-Islamic identity and culture and that globalization spreads secularism. These results seem to suggest that the issue of globalization and its impact on

culture remains a contentious, or perhaps little understood, issue. Interestingly, most respondents distinguished between the spread of English, which they did not view as a threat towards their religion, and globalization, about which they had more qualms. While they may disagree on the damage caused by global English, 70% of our respondents assert that the Arabic language was critical to understanding Islam. A loss of Arabic, then, would inevitably weaken the influence of Islam in the world.

It might be that modern life and its myriad adjustments, this time in the form of global English, has resulted in a new schema that cannot always support the specific terms and exchanges comprising this matchless feature of the Arabic language. What then, can take their place where Arab Muslims gather and English is spoken? It may be that, in the way of any relic whose time is past or whose survival is not a priority, the Arabic language will evolve as many of its dialects have, into a language only spoken by a few and written less and less. In that case, what becomes of Arab identity? These are the questions that all Muslims and Arabs who traditionally speak Arabic but may now be moving away from it, need to ask themselves. How will Muslims support, layer, and enhance their devotions through the spoken word, a task Prophet Muhammad saw as so vital? In Arabic, it is said that “the strength of a person is in his intelligence and tongue” (*quwatu al-insani fi ‘aqlihi wa lisanihi*). The Allah Lexicon has been an inseparable part of the language and the culture for fifteen centuries.

Perhaps the first step is this one, to assure that as many as possible are made aware of the history of these phrases and the reasons they became such a verbal force in all areas of life. Those who may be releasing this body of connection should be reminded of the frequency and diversity of these phrases and become conscious of what will be sacrificed solely in aid of modernity or sophistication or professional advancement. Perhaps the willing sacrifice of such a linguistic boon should be approached with due caution and some consideration of the societal, cultural, and religious ramifications. Yet, even we cannot propose the optimal response to the possible demise of this feature, and certainly we cannot presume know what it should be for others. Nevertheless, each of us has drawn a line in the sand at one time or another, saying, “This far and no further”, with regard to the retention of something we cherish. Perhaps, that moment is now, even as secular society tries to encroach on what we hold dear.

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Chapter 37

Target Iran¹⁷¹

Target Iran is the latest book by Scott Ritter, one of the UN's top weapons inspectors in Iraq between 1991 and 1998. He is the author of many books, including *Iraq Confidential* (2005), in which he revealed how the CIA deliberately sabotaged the activities of the UN Special Commission on Iraq. An integral, independent inspector, Ritter insisted over and over again, in 2002 and early 2004, that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The US, however, was only using allegations of weapons of mass destruction as a pretext to pursue its real aim: regime change. Seeing history repeat itself before his very eyes, Ritter has written *Target Iran* with a sense of urgency, hoping that his call from the wilderness will not go unheeded again.

Ritter's book is based on IAEA reports, media accounts, and his extensive contacts among academics, weapons inspectors, nuclear experts, intelligence officials, and diplomatic sources. *Target Iran* reveals that the present Iranian crisis was manufactured in Israel, an effort spearheaded by Major General Amos Gilad, senior advisor to Israel's Minister of Defense. Rejecting the disciplined approach that Israeli military intelligence had embraced since 1973, Gilad moved from fact-based analysis to faith-based konseptsia. He took on the task of elevating Iran to the state of number one threat facing Israel, overseeing the 1996 National Threat Assessment which called for regime change in Iran. Amos Gilad then engaged the services of the pro-Israeli lobby, the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), in order to bring the battle to the US Congress.

History, of course, was repeating itself. Amos Gilad, along with Israeli intelligence, had plenty of experience manipulating American political opinion against Syria and Iraq. He had previously placed Iraq as the number one threat facing the state of Israel, unleashing the propaganda campaign which eventually led to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. In February 2003, Amos Gilad made one of his most outlandish allegations, claiming that Saddam "kept astounding quantities of chemical weapons aimed at half the world. He apparently also has biological weapons and is engaged in building nuclear weapons." As Ritter explains, the statement was stunning since it was not backed by any serious assessment from within the Israeli military system.

¹⁷¹ This review of Scott Ritter's *Target Iran: The Truth about the White House's Plans for Regime Change* (New York: Nation Books, 2006) was published anonymously in the June 2007 issue of *Crescent International* as "The Truth about the US's Plans against Islamic Iran" (30-33).

Despite the fact that the Israeli-supplied information against Iraq had been manufactured, it was presented as fact by the fear-mongering Bush administration. Vice President Dick Cheney claimed that “Saddam has resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapon,” that “Saddam will acquire nuclear weapons fairly soon,” and that “he is using his procurement system to acquire the equipment he needs in order to enrich uranium to build a nuclear weapon” Condi Rice claimed that Saddam had the infrastructure and nuclear scientists to make a nuclear weapon and that he was only six months away from making a crude nuclear device. Dismissing United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) inspectors who found no evidence whatsoever of a nuclear program in Iraq, Rice claimed that “there will always be some uncertainty about how quickly he can acquire nuclear weapons. But we don’t want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud.” Even though Mohammed El-Baradei, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), refuted every single allegation made by the US regarding an Iraqi reconstituted nuclear program, his calls for calm fell on deaf ears. The decision to destroy Iraq had long been made both Israel and the US. The UN weapons inspection process had long been hijacked by the US, using it as a justification for military action against Iraq. Since lies lead to more lies, the reasons for invading and occupying Iraq have continued to morph: 9/11, the war against terror, weapons of mass destruction, freedom and democracy...

Although Ritter clearly understands the Israeli agenda against Iraq and Iran, he should also have stressed the Syrian-Lebanese situation. After the invasion of Iraq, Israeli intelligence intensified its propaganda against Syria and Iran. In April 2003, Amos Gilad said that “Now that Saddam Hussein’s regime has collapsed, it’s time for a change in Syria too.” On February 14, 2005, Lebanon’s former Prime Minister, Rafiq Hariri, was assassinated by the Mossad in Beirut, unleashing events that had been orchestrated for years by the Israel and US intelligence: a “popular” uprising against the Syrian “occupation” which was coined the “Cedar Revolution” by US Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs, Paula J. Dobriansky in a news conference. Lacking the sophistication of the Israelis and Americans when it comes to world-wide media manipulation and political machination, the Syrians were pressured into withdrawing their 14,000 troops from Lebanon on April 27, 2005. The aim of this operation was not to bring freedom and democracy to the Lebanese, but rather, to facilitate an Israeli invasion of Lebanon which took place in July of 2006. Lebanon and Syria, of course, were only part of the pie. The Zionists set eyes on the big baker, Iran, which was seen as the leavening agent in the

entire Islamic world. No soon was Saddam Hussein overthrown, that Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalmo told the UN General Assembly that “Iran has replaced Saddam Hussein as the world’s number one exporter of terror, hate and instability.” Following the lead of Amos Gilad, the Bush administration’s 2006 National Security Strategy listed Iran as the greatest threat to the United States, claiming that it was in violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Although Ritter possesses pieces of the puzzle, he has not completely put them together. As part of its paranoia, Israel believes that it is in a state of perpetual war. While the early Zionists openly advocated the creation of a Greater Israel, from the Nile to the Euphrates, they soon realized that such a goal was not attainable militarily. Rather than focusing on physical force in all circumstances, Israel invested enormously in its intelligence service, seeking to influence and eventually dominate regional powers. There was no need for annexation if Israel could get engaged to Egypt, sleep with Saudi Arabia, “get jiggy” with Jordan, elope with the Emirates, kiss Kuwait, tongue-twist Turkey, and make love to Morocco. As for those who fail to submit to Israeli seduction, they will simply be violated by means of regime change in order to create a buffer zone. Like a mercenary mistress, America has offered its services, reshaping the Islamic world, to protect its persuasive pimp. Israel, of course, understands its image and lack of credibility. In order to advance their agenda against Iran, the Israelis have used intermediaries which include the Kurds loyal to Mustafa Barzani, the Mujahidin Khalq, and US neo-conservatives.

Kurdish separatists loyal to Mustafa Barzani’s Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) have long maintained close ties with Israeli intelligence, relations which expanded during the Iraq-Iran War. Barzani initiated contacts with Israel in 1963, and military cooperation began in 1965 with Kurdish guerrillas being led into battle by officers from Israel’s military intelligence. Thanks to the Kurd connection, Israel created a number of intelligence gathering networks in Iran and Iraq. After the 1991 Gulf War, Israel greatly expanded its presence in northern Iraq, using elite teams of spies drawn from the ranks of Israeli Kurds of Iraqi origin which number around 50,000. By 1995, this Kurdish network was providing Israeli intelligence with information regarding Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, evidence which was used to support aggression and invasion against the country. At the same time, of course, Israel was supporting the destruction of the Kurdish rebellion in Turkey. In fact, it was largely due to Israeli intelligence that Turkish authorities were able to apprehend PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan.

Like the separatist Kurds, the People's Mujahidin of Iran, known as the Mujahidin Khalq or MEK, has also been providing Israel with information regarding Iran's military capabilities for decades. In order to gather public support for the overthrow of the Islamic Republic, Israeli intelligence started to feed false information to the National Council of Resistance in Iran in Washington, DC, often using the Israeli Lobby as an intermediary. The NCRI, of course, is merely the official façade of the Mujahidin Khalq which is designated as a terrorist organization by the US, Canada, the EU, and Iran. The Israelis denounce Iran for its alleged support of Hizbullah and Hamas when the Israelis themselves support terrorist groups like the MEK.

In the US, the Israeli agenda against Iran was further advanced by extreme right-wing think-tanks like the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, as well as the Project for the New American Century. Both the JINSC and the PNAC have long advocated the neutralization of Palestine, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, and Libya by means of regime change. Thanks to falsified information fed by Israeli intelligence to counter-revolutionary Iranians, and continued pressure by the America-Israel Public Relations Committee (AIPAC), members of Congress started to express their support for regime-change in Tehran. By the late 1990s, the US government had been convinced of the Israeli way of thinking. With the rise to power of the Republicans in 2000, many leading members of the JINSC and PNAC assumed positions of political power, including: George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Karl Rove, Richard Perle, James Woolsey, John Bolton, Richard Armitage, Zalmay Khalilzad, Lewis Libby, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz, among many more. By 2004, the US House of Representatives had passed resolution 398 which expressed the concern of the Congress over Iran's development of the means to produce nuclear weapons, and calls upon the President to use all appropriate means to deter, dissuade, and prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

Despite the fact that the IAEA concluded that there was no evidence of a nuclear weapons program in Iran, the head of the Mossad insisted that Iran was on the point of no return. During a trip to Germany, Donald Rumsfeld claimed that Iran has "a very active program and are likely to have nuclear weapons in a relatively short period of time." John Bolton claimed that the IAEA report was "impossible to believe" and that it actually proved that Iran was engaged in a "massive covert" effort to acquire nuclear weapons. In his words, "There's just no doubt that for close to 20 years, the Iranians have been pursuing nuclear weapons through a clandestine program that we've uncovered." According to Ritter, Bolton has leaked Israeli provided information to US media outlets.

The CIA, which lied about the existence of an Iraqi nuclear weapons program, continued its campaign of falsehood, claiming that: "Tehran has been pursuing a clandestine nuclear weapons program." As proof, the CIA stated that its satellites showed Iran actively trying to bury the centrifuge enrichment facility at Natanz.

As Ritter explains, the CIA position is absolutely absurd since the facility in Natanz was under the total monitoring of IAEA inspectors who reported back that the plant was still very much under construction and engaged in no activity whatsoever. Despite the objections of the IAEA, the Bush administration continues to misrepresent the capabilities of the Iranian enrichment program, irresponsibly inserting red herrings in their assessment. The US even claimed that the Shahab-3 missile was designed to carry a nuclear warhead. Since Israeli-US allegations regarding the Iranian nuclear enrichment program have been proved to be unfounded, their propaganda machines have attempted to cast a broader net. As Condi Rice now says, "it's not just Iran's nuclear program, but also their support for terrorism around the world. They are, in effect, the central banker for terrorism around the world." Iran is now accused of arming insurgents in Iraq, along with a renewal of old accusations: violation of human rights, oppression of women, suppressing democracy...

As Ritter explains, the Iranian nuclear power program dates back to the time of the Shah of Iran. During the mid 1970s, the monarchy decided to install a network of twenty nuclear reactors which would supply the country with all of its energy needs. Iran is a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and, according to Article IV, has the inalienable right to develop, research, produce, and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination. At present, Iran finds itself embroiled in a very difficult situation. If it walks away from the IAEA, it jeopardizes lucrative trade talks with the European Union. The Russians have also made it clear that their assistance is linked to Iran's continued cooperation with the IAEA. If Iran refuses to cooperate with the IAEA or pulls out of the NPT, Israel and the US will use it as proof of Iran's culpability. At the same time, the IAEA is infiltrated with Israeli and American agents, who use the inspection program to acquire sensitive information regarding to Iran's military capabilities. The hypocrisy of the world community towards Iran is not lost on Ritter. One only has to look to Israel to see the double standard. The Zionist regime has an undeclared nuclear weapons program, and refuses to sign on to the provisions of the NPT. Even El-Baradei admits that Iran has been much more forthcoming and cooperative about its nuclear program than Israel ever was. Such an important issue never makes it to

the mainstream media, which is more concerned with demonizing the present Iranian President.

Despite all the outrage caused by Ahmadinejad's rhetoric, and all the false allegations made regarding his hostage-holding past, Ritter places Iran's political scene in perspective. In the Islamic Republic, the President has no power whatsoever when it comes to using force against any threat, domestic or foreign. All power resides with the Supreme Leader, Imam 'Ali Khamenei. As Ritter reveals to those who are unfamiliar with the Iranian political system, the President can rant and rave all he wants about destroying Israel, but in the end, he has no effective authority to do so. This is in stark contrast to the paranoid delusions of John Bolton who presents Ahmadinejad as a Holocaust denier with his finger on a nuclear button. As Ritter points out, Imam Khamenei directly contradicted the President a scant ten days later, noting that Iran "will not commit aggression towards any nations." While Khamenei calls for calm, President Bush calls for war, openly threatening to use nuclear weapons against friends or foes who challenge US interests. The 2002 National Security Policy states that "the United States...will not hesitate to act alone...by acting preemptively." When indirectly asked about nuking Iran, Bush stated in September 2003 that "we don't take options off the table." In May 2006, John Bolton told B'nai Brith that if Iran did not play ball, it would not be allowed to stay in place.

As Ritter exposes, the US and Israel are paranoid players in the Iran crisis, the French and the Germans are appeasers, and the Russians are the only rational players. Interestingly enough, the solution to the crisis will not come from Western powers. According to Ritter, "Ayatollah 'Ali Khamenei may represent the best hope for a diplomatic resolution of the Iranian nuclear crisis." As the author explains, Khamenei has reached out to the US on several occasions by means of ambassadorial intermediaries. In its stubborn-minded arrogance, the diplomatically-deficient Bush administration failed to respond in any fashion. Khamenei, however, was not swayed, and continues to articulate a moderate approach towards resolving the differences between Iran and the US. Strategically silenced by the main-stream media in the Western world, Imam Khamenei seems to be the sole hope for saving Iran.

As Ritter has revealed in his book, "the conflict currently underway between the US and Iran is, first and foremost, a conflict born in Israel. It is based upon an Israeli contention that Iran poses a threat to Israel, and defined by Israeli assertions that Iran possesses a nuclear weapons program. None of this has been shown to be true, and

indeed much of the allegations made by Israel against Iran have been clearly demonstrated as being false. And yet the US continues to trumpet the Israeli claims.” The author denounces the unparalleled influence the Israeli lobby exerts over the US Congress and the Executive Branch of government. He reminds Americans that while many of them may feel compelled to support Israel out of sense of moral duty and obligation, Israel in the end does not share the same moral bond in terms of supporting the United States. As Ritter explains, Israeli security policy makers view America as but a tool to be wielded in support of larger Israeli interests.

Whether reason will prevail regarding the Iranian crisis remains to be seen. The outlook, however, is far from promising. As Ritter admits, “When it comes time to Iran, the Bush administration ultimately has only a single policy objective: regime change, at any cost.” As the author explains, US military and intelligence officials had reviewed the possibility of a decapitating strike against Iran’s nuclear program, and the results were not encouraging. Unlike Iraq, Iran does not possess a single target that could be bombed to destroy a nuclear program. In Iran, there are numerous targets, spread out over a vast territory, requiring a massive military effort. According to military planners, a war against Iran lacked the certainty of success, risking a rapid escalation of violence which could not be contained. In short, “according to U.S. military planners, an attack on Iran, even if it was limited in scope to Iran’s nuclear activities, would rapidly spin out of control into a regional conflict that could not be contained.” Ritter’s conclusion is gripping:

Iran is not Iraq... Iran remains a very modern nation state...with access to the complete spectrum of technologies... This includes military technology. Iran is a vastly larger country than Iraq, with a correspondingly larger population and military. The Iranian people are a proud people who cherish their culture history, and independence. Any notion that the Iranian people who somehow stand idly while the United States bombarded their nation or occupied their soil is tragically unfounded. Iran would resist any attack against its soil with all of the considerable means available. Any aerial bombardment of Iran would result in an immediate attack by Iranian missiles on targets in Israel, followed by a major Hezbollah rocketing from northern Israel. If U.S. military forces were deployed from the soil of any nation within striking distance of Iran, those nations too could be expected to come under Iranian attack. Iran will fire missile barrages against American forces in Iraq, and then engage the entire coalition occupation

force on the ground... Iran will do its utmost to play the oil card, not only shutting off its exportation of oil and natural gas, but also threaten the oil production of Iraq, Kuwait, UAE, and Saudi Arabia... US naval forces operating in the Persian Gulf will be put at risk... There is a better than even chance that Iran would succeed in shutting down the strait of Hormuz, chocking off the global oil supply...The Iranian reaction will have global reach, with ...terror bombings, kidnappings and/or assassinations... Attacks will definitely occur in Europe, and may even spread to American soil... Any American ground invasion of Iran would be doomed to fail... America simply does not have the conventional combat power to fight a sustained ground combat action in Iran... Faced with such a disaster, the United States would have to no choice but to escalate the conflict along military lines, which means engage Iran with nuclear weapons. At this juncture, the equation becomes unpredictable, the damage done incalculable, and the course of world history, including America's role as a viable global leader.

Ritter's vision may be realistic. Let us hope that it is not prophetic.

Chapter 38

American Fascists¹⁷²

American Fascists, by Chris Hedges, attempts to expose the Christian Right's war on America on the basis of Umberto Eco's fourteen principle features of fascism: 1) the cult of tradition, 2) the rejection of modernism, 3) the cult of action, 4) absolutism, 5) the fear of difference, 6) the appeal to a frustrated middle class, 7) patriotism, 8) a sense of humiliation, 9) the belief in perpetual warfare, 10) elitism and contempt for the weak, 11) the cult of heroism, 12) machismo, 13) selective populism, and finally, 14) the use of Newspeak. Hedges has divided his book into ten chapters: "Faith," "The Culture of Despair," "Conversion," "The Cult of Masculinity," "Persecution," "The War on Truth," "The New Class," "The Crusade," "God: The Commercial," and "Apocalyptic Violence," all of which encompass Umberto Eco's features of fascism. While there are elements of truth in many of Umberto Eco's features of fascism, some aspects are questionable, and others are erroneous. Evidently, any attempt to analyze them would require a book length philosophical treatise. So, for now, we can only focus on Hedges' book, making a few remarks on his mistakes.

The chapter on Faith reveals the extent of Protestant fundamentalism in the United States: 70 million evangelicals, 25% of the population, 200,000 churches. While the Western media is pleased to present Muslims as "fundamentalists," Hedges reveals that 40% of Americans believe that the Bible is the "actual word of God" and that it is "to be taken literally, word for word." Applied to the entire country, the number of literalists in the United States is about 100 million, nearly one third of the nation. Muslims, the author should have noted, also believe that the Qur'an is the word of God. However, unlike Christian fundamentalists, the majority of Muslims, with the exception of a literalist minority, believe that the Qur'an has various layers of inner and outer meanings, providing a rich hermeneutic tradition, and avoiding essentialism.

While one third of Americans are fundamentalists, this does not necessarily imply that they are all intolerant. Hedges makes the important distinction between evangelicals who concede that there are other ways to worship and serve God and radical fundamentalists who seek to create an intolerant, theocratic America. These radical Christians merely pay lip service to traditional justice, calling for a legal system which

¹⁷² This review of Chris Hedges' *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America* (New York: Free Press, 2006) was originally published anonymously in *Crescent International* in 2007.

promotes “Christian principles.” As Hedges explains, the movement preserves the appearance of law and democracy even as its leaders condemn all opponents--dismissed as “atheists,” “nonbelievers,” or “secular humanists”--to moral and legal oblivion. Christian fundamentalists are ardently opposed to diversity and multiculturalism and openly advocate the disempowerment and eradication of Muslim people. Far from being an insignificant isolated minority, Christian extremists have assumed positions of political and military power. The author presents the example of General William Boykin. After leading American troops into battle against a Somali warlord, he announced: “I knew my God was bigger than his. I knew that my God was a real God and his God was an idol.” Rather than being reprimanded for his inflammatory rhetoric, he was promoted to the position of deputy undersecretary of defense for intelligence. Boykin, a member of Faith Force Multiplier, a group which applies military principles to evangelism, believes that America is a “Christian nation” engaged in a battle against Satan, and that America’s Muslim adversaries can only be defeated “if we come against them in the name of Jesus.”

The supporters of the Christian right include corporations like Tyson Foods, Purdue, Amway, Wal-Mart, and Sam’s wholesale, among other huge financial backers of the movement. Due to strong financial backing from right-wing extremists, and the influence of neo-conservative think-tanks, the radical Christian right has moved from the fringes of society to the executive branch, the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the courts. Unlike Western hate mongers who equate Islam with terrorism, Hedges notes that radical Christian dominionists have no religious legitimacy. They are merely manipulating Christianity, and millions of sincere believers, to build a frightening political mass movement similar to Serbian nationalism, which resulted in the genocide of Bosnian Muslims.

Hedges’ chapters on “Conversion,” “The Cult of Masculinity,” and “The War on Truth,” help to provide a better understanding of the fascist Christian fundamentalist. The chapter on the “New Class” is particularly interesting as it reveals the corruption which reigns among the Christian right and its callous contempt for the poor. The right-wing oligarchy believes in the divine sanction of the free market, unhindered profits, and the most rapacious cruelties of globalization. These so-called Christian corporations have little interest in ethics, increasing profit at the expense of fair wages, health benefits, safe working conditions and pensions, seeking to reduce workers to the level of serfs. As Hedges exposes, the Christian Right espouses an ideology of death, calling for wanton

destruction of human beings, of the environment, of communities and neighborhoods, of labor unions, of the free press, of Iraqis, Palestinians, or others in the Middle East, of federal regulatory agencies, of social welfare programs, and public education. In short, the Christian right seeks to destroy anything and everything which stands in the way of Christian America and its God-given right to dominate the rest of the planet. As the author explains, these corporate Christians have twisted the Bible to serve America's god of capitalism and discredit the Enlightenment values it once prized. The author also exposes George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, and Donald Rumsfeld's association with the Council for National Policy (CNP), a secretive, right-wing organization that brings together dominionists like R.J. Rushdoony, Pat Robertson, and Jerry Falwell, with right-wing industrialists willing to fund them. He also exposes the alliance between Israeli Jews and radical Christians which is certainly strange considering that Protestant fundamentalists are traditionally racist and anti-Semitic. At the surface level, at least, the Christian Right has reached out to Zionists, Hispanics, and African Americans, exchanging old hatred for new ones, preferring now to demonize gays, liberals, immigrants, Muslims and others as forces beholden to the Antichrist. As Hedges points out, some of the most virulent enemies of Islam can now be found among the African American community. He provides the example of Glenn Plummer, a black minister from Detroit, and an active Republican, who is known for unleashing vituperative hate against Muslims.

The chapter on "The Crusade" is particularly interesting, exposing how the Christian right functions within the political system it seeks to destroy. For them, only "Bible-believing" judges are worthy of respect. Only Christian teachers are true educators. And only the pseudo-reporters on Christian broadcasting report the real news. In order to create their own "truth," conservative Christians have created their own publishing houses, printing books filled with falsehood and intolerance, mocking Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, and presenting the likes of Joseph McCarthy as patriots. Radical Christians are locked in a hermetic world devoid of questioning or dissent. They are discouraged from critical analysis and independent thought. They are taught to obey without question. Their leaders condemn criticism and debate as apostasy. Through home-schooling, conservative Christian schools, and radical Christian universities, new generations are formed which live in a fantasy world which rejects science, re-writes history, and espouses myths which are designed to destroy the open, pluralist society.

In “God: The Commercial,” Hedges reveals the corruption which reigns in Christian broadcasting, and the personal fortunes amassed in the name of Jesus. The Trinity Broadcasting Network is now beamed to some 75 countries, and its programs are carried by more than 6,000 stations in the US and abroad. Benny Hinn, who hosts “Praise the Lord,” professes to be a prophet and says that he will one day be able to raise the dead. He claims to speak to God daily, that he has ascended to heaven, and that he regularly receives revelation. Preachers like Paul Crouch have also been involved in sexual scandals.

The chapter “Apocalyptic Violence” exposes the cult of violence followed by Christian fascists, with gruesome examples drawn from the Left Behind series by Timothy LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. The apocalyptic fantasy of Christian fascists calls for the obliteration of the Earth to hail to glorious moment of Christ’s return. They get excited by war in Iraq, the invasion of Lebanon, the conflict between Israel and Palestinians, all glad-tidings of the world’s imminent end. In the Left Behind series, the United Nations, the European Union, Russia, Iraq, all Muslims, the media, liberals, freethinkers, and “international bankers” are all followers of the Antichrist. This hate propaganda has captivated tens of millions of American readers.

Hedges quotes hate-monger Gary Frazier from Texas who told his congregation that “every terrorist has been a Muslim.” This is a man who condemns George W. Bush as a moderate. In his words, “I heard our leadership say that we’re not at war with the religion of Islam, that there were Islamic radicals who had taken over the religion and they’re the ones we have a problem with. Folks, I’m here to tell you right now, I want to apologize to you on behalf of our president and our political leadership because they lied to us. We are at war with the religion of Islam, and it is not a handful of radical Islamists who are taking over the religion and hijacking it...” “Islam,” he says as his voice trembles, “is a satanic religion.”

For Christian fascists, America is ruled by evil, and must be overthrown, since it is only champions of the Christian state who have the right to rule. As part of their attempt to destroy the open and pluralist society, the Christian right has been actively creating a parallel system, complete with parallel Christian organizations to replace the old ones, all fully funded by George W. Bush through his unconstitutional support of “faith-based” initiatives. Pat Robertson openly calls for the creation of a new political religion aimed at taking control of all institutions, including mainstream denominations and governments, as a first step towards creating a global Christian empire.

As Hedges understands, “Debate with the radical Christian Right is useless. We cannot reach this movement. It does not want dialogue. It is a movement based on emotion and cares nothing for rational thought and discussion...This movement is bent on our destruction...These dominionists hate the liberal, enlightened world formed by the Constitution, a world they blame for the debacle of their lives. They have one goal--its destruction.” While the author does not deny Christian radicals their right to believe, he refuses to engage in a dialogue with those who deny the rights of others, who delegitimize their faiths, and who denounce their struggles to serve God as worthless. As the author explains, all dialogue must include respect and tolerance for the beliefs, worth, and dignity of others: “When this respect is denied, this clash of ideologies ceases to be merely a difference of opinion and becomes a fight for survival.”

Despite his detailed exposé of the philosophical traits of American fascism, the author does not believe that America will inevitably become a fascist state or that the Christian Right is the Nazi Party. He does believe, however, that the radical Christian right is a sworn and potent enemy of the open society and that its ideology bears the tenets of fascism. He views the attack by this movement on the rights and beliefs of Muslims, Jews, immigrants, gays, lesbians, women, scholars, scientists,...“nominal Christians,” and “secular humanists” as an attack on us all, on our values, our freedoms, and ultimately our democracy. As the author warns, “Tolerance is a virtue, but tolerance coupled with passivity is a vice.”

While Hedges’ book is an eloquently written overview of some of the fascist ideas espoused by the Christian Right, it is not without serious shortcomings. As an editor, I would never have approved the book for publication unless it duly discussed the Patriot Act, a prime piece of fascist legislation if there ever was one; the fundamentalist philosophy of some extreme elements of the Republican Party; the right-wing rants of Glenn Beck, O’Reilly, and Fox Television in general; the Hitlerian plans of the Program for the New American Century and other right-wing think-tanks; as well as fascist policies implemented in Iraq by the occupying forces, legislation which fulfills every Falangist fantasy. The author has also made the monumental mistake of associating Christian fundamentalism with “Islamic fundamentalism.” As Hedges says: “the Christian Right and radical Islamists, although locked in a holy war, increasingly mirror each other. They share the same obsessions. They do not tolerate other forms of belief or disbelief. They are at war with artistic and cultural expression. They seek to silence the

media. They call for the subjugation of women. They promote severe sexual repression, and they seek to express themselves through violence.”

If we discard the pseudo-Islamic groups created, funded, trained, and supported by US and Israeli intelligence services, the Islamic movement is not intolerant of other forms of belief or disbelief. Unlike Christian extremists who believe that Muhammad was a false prophet, Muslims recognize all the prophets from Adam to Noah, from Abraham to Moses, and from Jesus to Muhammad. With the exception of short periods of persecution by misguided Muslim movements, Islamic history has been one of tolerance, characterized by the mutual co-existence between members of the monotheistic and even polytheistic faiths. Unlike Christian extremists, who wish to disenfranchise Muslims, or simply micro-wave them in a modernized “Final Solution to the Muslim Problem,” Islamic law respects the rights of Christians and Jews, recognizing the legitimacy of their religious roots.

The Islamic movement is not at war with artistic and cultural expression. Excluding the CIA-sponsored extremists in Afghanistan, and the French-supported terrorists in Algeria, both of whom waged wars against their own cultures, the Islamic movement has produced a cultural and artistic resurgence in the Muslim world. While the fascist dictators ruling much of the Muslim world seek to suppress the media, the Islamic movement incessantly struggles against censorship, producing the only real journalism in the region. For many Muslims, Crescent International has been a beacon of light in a dark ocean of censorship. As to the claim that the Muslim movement seeks to oppress women, it suffices to say that where women are oppressed anywhere in the world, it is despite Islam, and not because of it. The worldwide Islamic movement calls for the Islamic emancipation of the Muslim woman, granting her the exalted status she merits. Instead of repressing sexuality, Islam promotes a healthy sex life within the confines of marriage.

Finally, the Islamic movement does not seek to express itself by means of violence. The Prophet Muhammad said that “The ink of a scholar is more precious than the blood of a martyr.” Instead of bullets and bombs, the Muslim movement has produced a wealth of Islamic literature. The Islamic Revolution of Iran, the prime example for the Muslim movement, was the result of a popular uprising. It was achieved by the overwhelming will of the people and without the use of guerrilla warfare or terrorism. If Muslims are pushed towards violence, it is the result of provocation. They are simply trying to survive like any organism which seeks to defend itself against the invasion of a foreign body. Any cornered cat will take out its claws. This is not an apology for

violence, but merely an understanding of cause and effect. Islam, it must always be remembered, categorically condemns the killing of non-combatants. Militants who murder civilians act in opposition of the ideology they claim to defend. Finally, despite manifesting a complete misunderstanding of the Muslim movement, Chris Hedges has written a revealing book on the American fascists who are waging a war, not only against America and its foundational values, but against the rest of the world.

Chapter 39

The New Nuclear Danger¹⁷³

In his farewell speech in January 1961, President Eisenhower warned: “In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic process.” Dr. Helen Caldicott’s *New Nuclear Danger* reveals the lethal danger of allowing the arms industry to dictate US foreign policy.

In her well-researched, duly documented book, Caldicott, an Australian medical doctor and founder of Physicians for Social Responsibility, reveals just how close the world has come to nuclear disaster. The most recent incident took place on September 11th, 2001, when the Bush administration raised the country’s nuclear alert codes from defcon 6 to defcon 2, the highest state of alert before the launch code is operable. Russia, with the second largest nuclear arsenal in the world, most certainly responded in kind. Consequently, thousands of nuclear weapons stood poised on hair-trigger alert, ready to be launched by the president of either country, with a decision time of only three minutes.

Another frightening incident, revealed by the author, took place on January 25th, 1995, when military technicians at radar stations in northern Russia detected signals from an American missile that had just been launched off the coast of Norway. The Americans had notified the Russians of this launch which carried a scientific probe. The message, however, never reached the upper echelons of the Russian military. As a result, Russian officials assumed that America had initiated a nuclear war. Aware that, if launched from a submarine, a missile containing eight hydrogen bombs could hit Moscow within fifteen minutes, the Russian computer containing nuclear launch codes was opened for the first time in history. President Boris Yeltsin sat at his computer as his military advisors instructed him how to launch a nuclear war. The process would only allow him three minutes to make a decision. At the last minute, the US missile veered off course, and President Yeltsin realized that Russia was not under attack.

In the past years, US behavior in Afghanistan and Iraq has veered frighteningly close to the deployment of nuclear weapons, with the defense department and members

¹⁷³ This review of Dr. Helen Caldicott’s *The New Nuclear Danger: George W. Bush’s Military-Industrial Complex* (New York: The New Press, 2004) was published anonymously in the August 2007 edition of *Crescent International* under the title “The US’s Dangerous Commitment to Nuclear Militarism” (29-31, 35).

of Congress strongly advising their use. Bush advisors, including Stephen Hadley, Deputy National Security Advisor Stephen Cambone, and William Schneider, have also advocated the use of nuclear weapons. Samuel Cohen, the creator of the neutron bomb, suggested that his weapon might be appropriate for Afghanistan. Although nuclear bombs have not yet been used in Afghanistan or Iraq, some of the weapons they have dropped have been described as “near nuclear.”

At present, the Pentagon-controlled media machine, CIA psychological operations, and duplicitous diplomatic efforts are operating at full mode, manipulating the masses to believe that “Islamists” are “Fascists”; that democratic Iran is a dictatorship, that Muslims are “Nazis,” and that Islamic leaders are akin to Hitler. The American administration and its Pentagon-approved press are busy manufacturing consent for atomic action against Iran. Bruised from the beating his troops are receiving in Iraq, President Bush seeks to boost his support by means of an “easy victory:” a nuclear assault against nuclear facilities in Iran. Emboldened by their sole superpower status, the US believes it can act with impunity, confident that no nuclear power will retaliate. If the US administration is foolish enough to act, not only will they become bogged down in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran, they may gradually draw other local powers into the conflict, including, but not limited to Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, Pakistan, and Israel. In the best case scenario, the conflict would last decades, bankrupt the U.S., and bring an end to American hegemony. In the worst case scenario, the conflict could escalate from a regional war to a world war, jeopardizing the survival of the entire human species.

Clearly, despite the end of the Cold War, the threat of nuclear annihilation continues to loom menacingly over the horizon. Currently, the US has 7,206 atomic weapons, 2,500 of which remain on hair-trigger alert, including 2,000 intercontinental land-based hydrogen bombs, 3,456 nuclear weapons on submarines roaming the seas 15 minutes from their targets, and 1,750 nuclear weapons on intercontinental planes ready for delivery. Russia has a similar number of strategic weapons, with approximately 2,000 on hair-trigger alert.

To put this power into perspective, the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, in the single greatest act of terrorism in modern history, was 13 kilotons. Current nuclear weapons are roughly one hundred times more powerful at 1,000 kilotons. A single Tomahawk cruise missile can carry the equivalent of 15 Hiroshima bombs, with each destroyer possessing the bombing power of 840 Hiroshimas. Each US Navy Trident submarine carries 192

thermonuclear warheads. The combined fleet threatens the equivalent of 80,000 Hiroshima-sized bomb blasts. At any given time, half of these subs are at sea, with their warheads continually on “alert” launch status. In total, there is enough explosive power in the nuclear arsenals of the world to “overkill” every person on earth 32 times.

The US currently has plans to fight and win a nuclear war, and is prepared to use nuclear weapons preemptively. The Pentagon’s official targeting plan, the single integrated operational plan (SIOP), includes 3,000 targets. Prior to the nineties, the US assured that it would only target countries with nuclear weapons. At present, however, even non-nuclear nations like Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Sudan, North Korea, and Algeria, are also targeted with nuclear weapons for the first time. According to French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine, it is ridiculous to believe that such states could threaten the world’s sole superpower.

Caldicott explains how Saddam Hussein, the Shah of Iran, the Taliban, and Osama Bin Laden were creations of the CIA; how the US supported the Iraqi military in its war of aggression against Iran; how it encouraged companies to export over 1.5 billion dollars in military goods to Iraq, including biological and chemical agents; how American companies like Bechtel constructed chemical weapon factories in Iraq; how the US operations in Kuwait were planned months prior to the Iraqi invasion, amounting to a veritable arms bazaar for US weapons manufacturers; how the 2000 elections were a Republican coup; how the Project for a New American Century wrote in 2000 that the US needed “a new Pearl Harbor” to jump-start the right-wing strategy for US military and world domination; and how the appearance of Osama Bin Laden on the world stage on September 11th, 2001, offered a convenient catalyst.

Caldicott exposes how American companies dominate the world’s weapons trade, arming both sides of any conflict as a basic business tactic, demonstrating a deep conflict of interest, both political and economic. To cite a single example of war profiteering, Vice President Cheney continues to be remunerated by Halliburton, a company he previously served as President, and which receives billions in dollars from US taxpayers in order to reconstruct Iraq. As the author points out, it is ironic that if a country previously armed by America--such as Iraq--becomes an “enemy,” US troops are killed by American weapons. US foreign strategy remains the same: play all hands, and control all outcomes.

The author uncovers the undemocratic influence of neoconservative think-tanks like the Project for a New American Century on the Pentagon. Founded in 1997 by Dick

Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz, the PNAC advocates US global domination by military force. As early as 1997, the PNAC called for the capture of Iraq to acquire its oil, to threaten regional leaders, and to establish a military staging area for the overthrow of several Middle Eastern regimes, including some US allies. In September 2000, the PNAC issued a report titled “Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategies, Forces, and Resources for the New Century” which called for a permanent US military presence in the Gulf “should Saddam pass from the scene” because “Iran may well prove as large a threat.” The PNAC, whose proposals have been largely embraced by the Bush administration, is uncompromisingly Zionist, and aggressively anti-Palestinian.

With the installation of the Republican regime in 2000, right-wing ideologues, many of them from the PNAC, migrated to positions of power, including Richard Perle, who profited greatly from the war in Iraq. Dubbed the “Prince of Darkness” in political circles, he served as the Chair of the Defense Advisory Committee, the civilian advisory board to the Pentagon, prior to acting as Deputy Secretary of Defense under Donald Rumsfeld. Another major player on the Defense Advisory Committee is James Woolsey, PNAC member and former Director of the CIA. He labels the Cold War “World War III” and calls for a “World War IV,” in which the US and the U.K. join forces to attacks Islamists, Iranian theocrats, Baath party “fascists” in Syria, Osama Bin Laden of al-Qaeda, Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, and the royal family in Saudi Arabia.

As revealed in the Nuclear Posture Review of 2002, Vice President Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, former Secretary of Defense, are proponents of pre-emptive nuclear strikes, and supporters of the Hitlerian US policy of “full-spectrum dominance.” Prior to leaving office, Rumsfeld was involved in creating the Preemptive Operations Group (the P2OG or “Pee-Twos”), an expansive group of secret Pentagon armies to be installed around the world, to deliberately incite violence, stimulating reactions from terrorists and states, and thus exposing them to quick-response attacks by US forces.

While the Bush administration insists that Iran has a secret nuclear weapons program, Caldicott reveals that, in reality, it is the US which is in violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Under the guise of the Stockpile Stewardship and Management Program, which is supposed to ensure the safety and reliability of the nuclear stockpile, the US is actively developing new nuclear weapons, including: the B61-11 earth-penetrating “bunker buster,” the BIOS, and a new war-head for Trident missiles. In October 2000, Congress passed an authorization bill for research and possible development of a 5 kiloton “user-friendly” mini-nuke with a blast radius of one mile. In

2003, Congress actually approved the use of “mini-nukes.” The Bush administration is also actively developing the Star Wars Program which seeks to ensure American dominion over earth and space in blatant violation of the NPT.

While Caldicott is factual and academic, she makes several questionable claims. For example, she fears that members of the Pakistani military could rebel, gain control of the army and its 20 to 50 nuclear weapons, and pass these on to the Taliban in al-Qaeda in Afghanistan or their global networks. She claims that 100 small suitcase Russian nuclear weapons have been lost over some years, that al-Qaeda may now possess several of these, which could be smuggled into America on a small boat or overland, from Canada or Mexico, in a truck. She paints pictures of Nuclear Oklahoma Cities killing tens of thousands of people. She also expresses fear that a terrorist could infiltrate a nuclear power plant and engineer its meltdown

While a Muslim movement might eventually overthrow the Pakistani dictatorship, even the most extreme elements in the army would not risk nuclear annihilation by US retaliation to support the remnants of the Taliban or some subterranean terror cell operating abroad. Political power seeks to perpetuate itself, not annihilate itself. In the event an extreme sector of the military assumed power in Karachi, its main concern would be maintaining the delicate peace between India and Pakistan, as well as attenuate the destabilizing effects caused by such a regime change.

As for the fear of suitcase sized nuclear bombs, Caldicott seems to have succumbed to sensationalist news-stories and Pentagon propaganda which seeks to instill an atmosphere of fear to justify its perpetual world-wide war. After decades of anti-nuclear activism, the author should be well-aware that nuclear weapons are generally large. While some nuclear warheads could fit into the back of a truck, it is unlikely that any could fit into a briefcase. The so-called “suitcase” bombs made by the Russians are more the size of a large back-pack or locker. Such devices have the explosive force of 1 kiloton of TNT. They are thus capable of destroying a building, not a city. Sold or stolen, these low impact nuclear weapons have a very short shelf-life. Without required maintenance they could only produce a minimal yield or no yield at all.

Generally perceptive when it comes to CIA support for Saddam Hussein, the Shah of Iran, the Taliban, and Osama Bin Laden, Caldicott has fallen for the foundational myth of war on terror. According to the author, “the international community should work cooperatively together, including all the intelligence organizations--MI5, MI6, Mossad, the FBI, CIA, NSA--to identify, locate, and capture these international terrorists

and bring them to trail before an international court of justice, as were their predecessors, the Nazis.”

While Caldicott comprehends the machinations which led to the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, she fails to see the same dark hand manipulating “Muslim” terrorism. The US arms industry simply cannot survive without an enemy: real or fictitious. Rather than demilitarizing upon the downfall of the Soviet Union, the Pentagon, along with the military-industrial complex, decided to create a new enemy. Thus was born the Islamist, who conveniently replaced the Communist.

According to Richard Labévière’s *Dollars for Terror*, which is endorsed by the government of France, “Islamic fundamentalism” has been fueled, funded, and supported as part of US foreign policy since its inception. The Islamist is an old friend of the US, used to combat communism, as well as destabilize and divide the Muslim world. There are those who hold that the US turned their backs on their bearded buddies after September 11th. This would be nothing new for the CIA. Manuel Noriega of Panama was a CIA operative. After romancing Fidel Castro, he said that he had the Americans by the balls. They overthrew him and tossed him in prison for forty years. Saddam Hussein was a CIA choir-boy. He acted against US interests, and was soon discarded.

There are those, however, like Labévière, who believe that the CIA is still playing the Islamist card, engineering “Islamic” extremism and sectarianism to justify its imperial agenda. With the exception of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, and bona fide Muslim movements worldwide, a vast array of “Islamic” terrorist groups, are created, armed, and funded by the CIA, turning Berbers against Arabs, Arabs against Kurds, Persians against Arabs, and Sunni against Shi’ite, to neutralize Muslim nations. According to the intelligence community, the US and Saudi Arabia, by means of Prince Bandar “Bush,” continue to fund Salafi extremist movements throughout the world, many of which are affiliated with al-Qaeda, in order to halt the spread of Shi’ite influence. The criteria to determine the legitimacy of an Islamic movement is clear: it is inclusive, not divisive; it is Pan-Islamic, not sectarian; it selects legitimate military targets, not civilians; and it never attacks Muslims. These are the criteria of Imam Khomeini who insisted that those who divide Sunnis and Shi’ites are the real enemies, regardless from which community they claim to come.

As to Caldicott’s equating terrorists with Nazis, she is utterly in error, and perilously close to portraying the Islamic movement, and Muslims in general, as fascists. In this claim, she has, once again, allowed herself to be unduly influenced by anti-

Islamite propaganda. Anyone familiar with history and political science knows that there are few similarities between al-Qaeda and fascism, and none whatsoever between the mainstream Muslim movement and Nazism. The philosophy of US neoconservatives, Christian fundamentalists, and right-wing Republicans, however, are perfectly parallel with the Fascist philosophy. For Fascists to accuse Muslims of being Nazis is Orwellian double-speak.

Finally, although the book deals with the U.S. as the main nuclear threat in the world, it should have included some reference to Israel's arsenal of 500 nuclear bombs, aimed menacingly at every major Muslim city in the Middle East and beyond. Israel and the US are the only two nations in the world which have policies of pre-emptive strikes. According to the International Court of Justice, however, the threat or use of nuclear weapons is a violation of various articles of international law, including the Geneva Conventions, the Hague Conventions, the UN Charter, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

A passionate plea for peace, Caldicott's *New Nuclear Danger* is a timely warning against an impending apocalypse, exposing its agents, instigators, and cataclysmic consequences. Considering its use of nuclear bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki; its threat to nuke the Soviet Union during the Cuban missile crisis; its refusal to ban biological weapons, land-mines, and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; its violations of the Non-Proliferation Treaty; its development of a defense missile system; its illegal wars of imperial aggression; its invasions of sovereign nations; its use of depleted uranium weapons; its use of cluster bombs and chemical weapons; its practice of carpet bombing; its deliberate destruction of civilian populations; its policy of "regime change"; its creation of conflicts to fill the coffers of the arms industry; its long-history of supporting fascist dictators, terrorists, and death squads in the developing world; its violations of international law and universal human rights; its rejection of the Geneva Convention; its suppression of civil liberties under the Patriot Act; its rejection of habeas corpus; its admission of hearsay and secret evidence in court; its illegal surveillance of its own citizens; its illegal detentions in the U.S. and Cuba; its policy of extraordinary rendition; its authorization of torture; its plans to dominate both earth and space; its belief in unilateralism; its contempt for the United Nations and the world community; its policy of pre-emptive strikes against both friends or foes; and its perpetual threats to annihilate the planet in a nuclear holocaust; the US has clearly positioned itself as the real rogue nation in the world.

Chapter 40

Blackwater¹⁷⁴

Blackwater, Jeremy Scahill's meticulously researched best-seller, chronicles the rise of the world's most powerful mercenary army. Headquartered in North Carolina, Blackwater operates the largest private military facility on the planet. It presently has over 2,300 private soldiers deployed in nine countries, including the US, and maintains a base of 21,000 former Special Forces troops, soldiers, and retired law enforcement agents¹⁷⁵. It has a private fleet of more than twenty aircraft, including helicopter gunships, and a surveillance blimp division, and operates its own intelligence division.

Besides its 7,000 acre facility in North Carolina, Blackwater has training facilities in Illinois, known as Blackwater North, and is attempting to build a training camp in California, known as Blackwater West. The company has a training center in the Philippines and operates a training camp in a remote mountain area of Honduras, where it prepares mercenaries for deployment in Iraq. Blackwater holds hundreds of millions of dollars in US government contracts, including "black contracts" kept from public oversight.

Besides US Navy Seals and Special Forces, Blackwater mercenaries include ex-soldiers from South African apartheid forces, including some from the notorious Koevoet. The company actively hires Chilean commandos, some of whom were trained under the brutal regime of Augusto Pinochet. Blackwater hires mercenaries from countries with histories of brutal dictatorships, human rights abuses, and government controlled death squads, and markets its services to countries which wage war against Islam and Muslims.

Founded and controlled by Erik Prince, Blackwater is the private army of a radical right-wing Christian millionaire. A major bankroller of President Bush's

¹⁷⁴ This review of Jeremy Scahill's *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army* (New York: Nation Books, 2007) was published anonymously in the October 2007 issue of *Crescent International* as "Detailed Account of the Role of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army in Iraq and Elsewhere" (27-30).

¹⁷⁵ According to recently released Pentagon statistics, there are 242,657 private military contractors working for the US Department of Defense: 132,610 in Iraq and 68,197 in Afghanistan. Despite his promises of peace, President Barack Obama (b. 1961) increased the use of mercenaries by 23% in Iraq and 29% in Afghanistan in the second quarter of 2009. Military contractors, both armed and unarmed, now represent approximately 50% of the total US forces in both countries. See: Scahill, Jeremy. "Obama Has 250,000 "Contractors" in Iraq and Afghan Wars, Increases Number of Mercenaries." *Rebel Reports* (June 1st, 2010). Internet: <http://rebelreports.com/post/116277092/obama-has-250-000-contractors-in-iraq-and-afghan>

campaign, Prince is an active supporter of the broader Christian-right agenda. The Prince family has been deeply involved in the secretive Council for National Policy, which brings together the most powerful conservatives in the country to strategize on how to turn the country further to the right.

Erik Prince sits on the board of Christian Freedom, a group which uses “humanitarian aid” as a cover for missionary activities. Despite operating in largely Muslim countries, the group professes that the Bible is the only inspired, infallible, and authoritative Word of God. Prince is a close friend and benefactor of some of the country’s most militant Christian extremists, such as Gary Bauer and Charles Colson. In one of his most outrageous comments, Colson claimed that Muhammad’s Qur’an was the product of spiritual diarrhea: “I think he’d had too many tamales the night before.”

As an indication of the ideological basis of Blackwater, some of its executives boast membership in the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, a Christian militia formed in the eleventh century with the mission of defending “territories that the Crusaders had conquered from the Moslems.” The outsourcing of US military operations in Muslim countries and in secular societies to such neo-crusaders reinforces the greatest fears of many in the Islamic world.

As Scahill expertly unveils, the rise of Blackwater was encouraged by the Republican administration. When George W. Bush was appointed to power, he brought a team of ideologues and former corporate executives, many from large weapons manufacturers. These right-wing Republicans had two plans when they came to office: regime change in strategic nations, and the enactment of the most sweeping privatization and outsourcing operation in US military history.

As the foundational document of the Program for a New American Century states, such a revolutionary change could not be accomplished without a catalyst like a new Pearl Harbor. On September 11th, 2001, Rumsfeld and his theo-conservatives were conveniently provided with a pretext to put their plans in motion: outsourcing the military, not to save money, but to make money, to fill the coffers of the war profiteers, and to embark on a mission to re-map the Muslim world by means of mercenaries.

With mad money to be made, and the possibility to rape and murder with impunity, thousands of mercenaries rushed off to Iraq to make it rich. By the end of Rumsfeld’s tenure, there were an estimated 100,000 private contractors on the ground in Iraq, an almost one to one ratio to active-duty US soldiers.

Scahill relates several stories in which Blackwater militiamen were killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. In one incident, the Islamic Army of Iraq downed a Blackwater aircraft, resulting in six deaths. Although the murdered men were all mercenaries, media reports overwhelmingly referred to the aircraft as civilian or commercial.

The most famous instance of all, however, occurred in Fallujah shortly after the toppling of the Baathist regime. Readers will recall the headlines of the day: “Iraqi Mob Mutilates 4 American Civilians” said the Chicago Tribune, “US Civilians Mutilated in Iraq Attack” screamed the Washington Post, and “American Desecrated” denounced the Miami Herald.

Besides critical thinkers who read independent media, the majority of Americans believed that innocent American civilians were butchered by barbaric Arabs. The men who were murdered, however, were mercenaries, killers for hire, who died indignantly attempting to retrieve some catering equipment.

Although it has more mercenaries in Iraq than total British troops, Blackwater is merely one of many mercenary firms operating in Iraq. Others include DynCorp, whose mercenaries trafficked sex slaves in Bosnia, Military Professional Resources Incorporated, Control Risks Group, Erinys, Aegis, ArmorGroup, Hart, Kroll, Steele Foundation, among many others.

In order to create a buffer to ensure their immunity, the US military hired mercenaries from the US-based Titan Corporation and CACI to conduct interrogations at Abu Ghraib. According to an investigation conducted by Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba, an interrogator at CACI and a translator for Titan “were either directly or indirectly responsible for the abuses at Abu Ghraib” The Center for Constitutional Rights charged that Titan and CACI conspired with US officials to “humiliate, torture, and abuse persons” to win more contracts for their “interrogation services.”

Although depicted as a Mahdi Army assault against American forces, the battle which occurred on April 4, 2004 in Najaf, took place between Moqtada Sadr’s militia and Blackwater mercenaries. The battle, which was captured on video, shows Blackwater mercenaries indiscriminately firing hundreds of rounds into Iraqis crowds and slaughtering scores of clerics in one of the holiest sites of Shi’ism. The video’s audio reveals the mind-set of the murderers: “Fuckin’ niggers!” spews a Blackwater mercenary as masses of unarmed Muslims are massacred.

While Blackwater mercenaries are known to operate as security forces in Iraq, their role in “black contracts” have the subject of much speculation. As a real

investigative journalist, Scahill has carefully put the pieces together. Unable to uproot the resistance using conventional military techniques, US policymakers turned to a strategy as American as apple pie: the death squad.

As early as January 2004, journalist Robert Dreyfuss reported on the existence of a covert US program in Iraq that resembled the CIA's Phoenix assassination program in Vietnam, Latin America's death squads or Israel's official policy of targeted murders of Palestinian activists. According to Allan Nairn, who exposed US backed death squads in Central America in the 1980s, "These programs, which backed the killing of foreign civilians, it's a regular part of US policy. It's ingrained in US policy in dozens upon dozens of countries."

According to Dreyfuss, the US established a three billion dollar "black fund" hidden within Iraq appropriation fund approved by Congress in November 2003. The money would be used to create a paramilitary unit manned by militiamen from former Iraqi exile groups. Experts immediately warned that pro-American paramilitaries would engage in extra-judicial killings, not only of armed insurgents, but of nationalists, civilians Baathists, and other opponents of occupation. Approved and funded, the plan was put into place by Jim Steele, John Negroponte, and William Boykin.

Jim Steele, who acted as Paul Bremer's deputy, served as a colonel in the Marines in the mid 1980s, coordinating US military advisor to Salvadoran Army death squads in their battle against FMLN guerrillas. According to Scahill, Army Lt. Gen. William Boykin, famous for his anti-Muslim rants, was charged by Rumsfeld to hunt down "high value targets." Rumsfeld also placed Boykin in charge of the Abu Ghraib prison, sending him to Camp X Ray in Guantanamo to learn new methods to be applied in Iraq.

The main man, of course, was John Negroponte, who was appointed US Ambassador to Iraq. A former US Ambassador to Honduras, Negroponte coordinated covert support to Nicaraguan Contra and Honduran death squads in the 1980s. While in Baghdad in the summer of 2004, Negroponte was visited by Duane Clarridge, an old colleague who ran the CIA's covert war against communism in Central America. While Negroponte only spent a short period of time in Iraq, analysts believe that he was sent to Iraq to establish death squads. As Andres Contreras, the Latin American program director of Non-Violence International, said:

It's no coincidence that Negroponte, having been the Ambassador in Honduras, where he was very much engaged in the kind of support for death squads, was the

Ambassador in Iraq, and this is the kind of policy that was starting to be implemented there, which is not just going after the resistance itself but targeting for repression, torture and assassination, the underlying support base: the family members, and those in the communities where the resistance is. These kinds of policies are war crimes.

Shortly after Negroponte's departure, death squad activity started to surge in Iraq. Newsweek described the new strategy as the "Salvador Option." Instead of fighting the insurgents directly, US Special Forces were focusing on advising, supporting, and training Iraqi death squads. Hand-picked from Kurdish Peshmerga fighters and Shi'ite militiamen, the death squads would target, not only Sunni insurgents, but their support base. According to Scahill's sources, Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, a former CIA asset, was the most forthright proponent of the Salvador Option.

The shift from conventional warfare to a Central American style "dirty war" soon found support among some Shi'ites in the new Iraqi military. Army Major Swadi Ghilan openly expressed his desire to exterminate most of the Sunnis in Iraq: "The army should execute the Sunnis in their neighborhoods so that all of them can see what happens, so that all of them learn their lesson." Another Shi'ite, Sgt. Ahmed Sabri, said: "Just let us have our constitution and elections...and then we will do what Saddam did--start with five people from each neighborhood and kill them in the streets and then go from there."

By 2005, death squad activity started to spread throughout Iraq in a pattern uncannily similar to Central America during the 1980s. John Pace, a forty year UN diplomat who served as the Human Rights Chief for the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq during Negroponte's time in office, described the rise of death squadrons in Iraq: "They first started as a kind of militia...which was the military wing of various factions." Eventually, "many of them [were] acting as official police agents as a part of the Ministry of Interior...You have these militias now with police gear and under police insignia...They have roadblocks in Baghdad and other areas, they would kidnap other people. They have been very closely linked with numerous mass executions."

While "Safavid Shi'ites" have swelled the ranks of US supported death squads, Scahill fails to mention US support for "Sunni" death squads as well. As many analysts have observed, the US views "Sunni" death squads as an insurance policy against the present government. Just like the US supported both the Contras and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and both the Taliban and the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan, the US is playing with a full hand in Iraq, turning Sunnis and Shi'ites to justify its occupation,

ensure its control over oil reserves, preserve its strategic military presence, destabilize the region, and debilitate the country, ensuring it will not pose a threat against its Israeli ally.

As former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter foretold several years ago: “the Salvador Option will serve as the impetus for all-out civil war.” By Nov. 2006, 1,000 Iraqis were being killed each week. From the beginning of the US occupation to the present, some 750,000 Iraqis have lost their lives.

While the fiasco in Iraq was in full flames, New Orleans was struck by Hurricane Katrina, a disaster viewed by Blackwater as an opportunity to “diversify” their business. With no soldiers or National Guards to respond to the disaster, “private contractors” were the first to reach the region. Mercenaries from Blackwater, DynCorp, American Security Group, Wackenhut, Krioll, and Instinctive Shooting International beat the federal government and most aid organizations. Authorized to use deadly force, one hundred and fifty heavily armed Blackwater mercenaries, spread into the chaos of New Orleans. Rather than help with search and rescue, they were sent to stop looting and confront “black gang-bangers.”

While Blackwater claims that it was there to help the relief effort, it profited from the disaster, raking in 73 million dollars from its Katrina work by June 2006. New Orleans residents, along with journalists, aid agencies, local police and firefighters, were shocked to see US and foreign mercenaries occupying their city.

Among the most unsavory characters occupying New Orleans were Israeli mercenaries. Working for Instinctive Shooting International, they were billed as “veterans of Israel Defense Force, Israel National Police Counter Terrorism units, Instructors of Israel National Police Counter Terrorism units, General Security Service, and other restricted intelligence agencies.” As proof of his professionalism, one Zionist mercenary proudly stated: “We have been fighting the Palestinians all day, every day, our whole lives.”

With its own intelligence apparatus, Blackwater is years ahead of politicians in projecting future profit potential, strategically positioning itself in problem spots around the planet. To avoid drawing attention, the US deployed private Blackwater paramilitaries to Azerbaijan, just north of the Iranian border, in July 2004. In return for 2.5 million dollars, the company created a virtual base where it trained an elite group of Azeri forces known as the Caspian Guard. Blackwater is also aggressively marketing itself for deployment in Darfur.

Despite claiming loyalty to the US, Blackwater claims that its forces are above the law. The company claims that its mercenaries are “civilian contractors” who are not subject to the Pentagon’s Uniform Code of Military Conduct while simultaneously claiming immunity from civilian litigation because its private soldiers are part of the US Total Force. Since the Dept. of Defense refuses to prosecute mercenaries who kill civilians and since Congress grants military contractors immunity from state-court litigation, private contractors can get away with murder.

According to Scahill, Blackwater is a Praetorian Guard in the “war on terror.” For those unfamiliar with history, the Praetorian Guard provided security services to Roman emperors. The group was disbanded after its influence had increased to the point where it could make and unmake emperors. As Michael Ratner, the President of the Center for Constitutional Rights, warns: “These paramilitary groups bring to mind Nazi Party brown-shirts, functioning as an extrajudicial mechanism that can and does operate outside the law. The use of these paramilitary groups is an extremely dangerous threat to our own rights.”

Mercenaries, it must be remembered, are war-whores, guns-for-hire, and slut-soldiers who can be bought and sold. Motivated by money, they bend over to the highest bidder. Interested in profit, they have no interest in peace, since stability is bad for business. While they presently act as the imperial arms of US foreign policy, mercenaries do not serve the people nor are accountable to the people. As the rabid rottweilers of the right-wing, private paramilitaries have historically been used by fascists to create and control totalitarian states.

At a time when Muslim teens can’t even go camping, play paint-ball, and practice martial arts without being prosecuted for plotting terrorist attacks, it is utterly hypocritical for the US administration to allow Christian fundamentalists to form mercenary armies with tens of thousands of Timothy McVeighs. Thanks to George W. Bush and his bigoted buddies, the American people now face a private parallel army, a fascist military force capable of supporting a Christian fundamentalist coup.

Scahill’s book is a slap in the face to the silent majority. As a result of the complacency of the American public, US democracy is degenerating into a dictatorship. Following the fascist policy of “perpetual war,” the extreme right portrays Muslims as the fiends of freedom and destroyers of democracy. Deceived by Dajjalian diatribe, the American people have overlooked the enemy within: the rise of right-wing militias.

Owned and operated by neo-crusaders, private paramilitaries presently pose the single greatest threat to the United States of America.

Chapter 41

Radical Reform¹⁷⁶

Tariq Ramadan's latest book, *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation* consists of 16 chapters divided into three major sections: "On Reform," "Classical Approaches of the Fundamentals of Law and Jurisprudence," "For a New Geography of the Sources of Law and Jurisprudence" and "Case Studies."

The author commences by criticizing the process of *ijtihad* as it currently exists. Although it made things progress for centuries, he finds that *ijtihad* is highly inadequate, has not resolved the crises faced by Muslims, and has not produced the expected renewal. As far as *taqlid* is concerned, Ramadan argues that the imitation of past scholars makes Muslims believe they can avoid today's challenges by taking refuge in the past.

Ijtihad, believes Ramadan, has always been behind the times, simply seeking to interpret Islamic law in light of new changes and developments in society. He is critical of literalist, traditionalist, conservative, and culturally-based interpretations of Islam. The Arab culture, he points out, is not the sole culture of Islam. Hence, if Islam is truly a universal religion, then it must provide its followers with the means to approach cultural diversity.

The author provides an intelligent criticism of Salafism which confuses eternal principals with historical models, reducing the universality of Islam to the dream of an impossible return to the past, and an irresponsible "nostalgia of origins." As the author points out, many Salafi reductionists are unable to distinguish between religion and culture, viewing diversity and socio-cultural evolution as religious innovations. Not only is Ramadan critical of most traditional approaches to the *ijtihad*, he is critical of virtually every Islamic movement when it comes to their methods of implementing Islamic law.

Having dismissed the various existing approaches to *ijtihad*, Ramadan proposes moving from "adaptation reform" which requires religious, philosophical, and legal thought to adapt to evolutions in society to "transformational reform" which requires a mastery of all fields of knowledge in order to anticipate the complexity of social, political, philosophical, and ethical challenges. Adaptation *fiqh* simply responds to change while transformational *fiqh* questions, criticizes, and challenges, aiming to change the order of things on the basis of Islamic ethics.

¹⁷⁶ This review of Tariq Ramadan's *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009) was originally published in *AJISS* 26.4 (Fall 2009): 108-110.

In order to achieve “transformational reform,” Ramadan believes that text scholars, namely, the traditional religious scholars, and context scholars, namely, scholars in every other field, work together on equal footing to set off this radical reform. Although he insists that the Qur’an and the Sunnah should be the primary sources of law, he believes that they must be supplemented by other sciences since there exists two Revelations, the Qur’an, and the Universe, that need to be read and understood in parallel.

Although he agrees that authority over the fundamentals of faith and worship must remain with the jurists, since they are exclusively determined by the text, he believes that other specialists should be equally involved in the interpretation of social, economic, and scientific issues. It is imperative, he argues, to distinguish between immutable principles, and principles which are subject to change. Considering the complexity of problems facing Muslims in the modern world, it is impossible for a text specialist to be able to assimilate the whole range of those sciences, not even a council of religious scholars would suffice, since those fields of knowledge are largely outside of their own area of expertise.

Ramadan describe the attitude of religious scholars to his theory as defensive, one of reactionary resistance and protection, the natural response of their inability to master the sciences concerned with humankind, societies and the Universe. As the author points out, religious scholars live in autarchy, well removed from research in the exact, experimental, and social sciences, relying on scanty information to issue legal rulings about realities and contexts that are inevitably more complex than they can understand.

In order to Islamize modernity, as opposed to modernize Islam, Ramadan believes that it is urgent to organize equal-representation, egalitarian, and specialized research and fatwa committees. Not only should Muslim jurists work with Muslim specialists in other fields, non-Muslim context scholars should also sit on such committees. In Ramadan’s estimation, all Muslim intellectuals, thinkers, and specialists should be considered as ‘*ulama*’. Although he believes that all Muslims scholars and scientists should contribute to transformational *fiqh*, he strongly opposes the exercise of free *ijtihad* proposed by “progressive” circles who seek to “reform” Islam.

Although he blames Muslim jurists for maintaining a backwards approach to jurisprudence, he also blames Muslims in general for failing to demand more of their scholars. According to Ramadan, many Muslims seem content with adaptive tactics which comfort them rather than acting as agents of transformation in a world that

constantly challenges the global ethics of Islam. In this regard, the section on “Case Studies,” which addresses some of the ethical issues facing Muslims in the West, is particularly relevant.

While Ramadan’s theory may seem novel to some Muslims, he has merely borrowed it from Christian Liberation Theology. In fact, he seems to have drawn the idea from Roger Garaudy, the Christian-Communist turned Islamist, who believes that revolutionary writings and scientific studies represent an extension of Revelation. Although it is true that the Creation is also a Revelation, Ramadan is wrong to believe that Islamic jurisprudence can be transformed by ordinary jurists and scientists when the sole authority capable of doing so is Imam al-Mahdi.

Ramadan also confuses jurisprudence and ethics which are two separate fields. The field of jurisprudence establishes the limits of what is permissible and what is forbidden while the field of ethics addresses what is morally ideal. The author also confuses *shari‘ah* and *fiqh*. He argues that *shari‘ah* is of divine origin while *fiqh* is the product of human intellectual effort. *Shari‘ah* is Islamic law, and Islamic law is regulated by *fiqh* or Islamic jurisprudence.

Although there are elements in the *shari‘ah* which are immutable, many of the laws are the results of *ijtihad*. As such, there is not a single *shari‘ah* or system of law in Islam. There are Maliki, Hanafi, Shafi‘i, Hanbali, and Ja‘fari legal systems, among other interpretations of the Qur’an and the Sunnah. Although the Sunni *shari‘ah* became stagnant for centuries as a result of the closing of the doors of independent interpretation, the Shi‘ite *shari‘ah* has continued to evolve over time.

Considering the condition of the Muslim Ummah, Ramadan’s claim that there exists no Islamic alternative to the dominant neo-liberal model is disheartening. His image of al-Andalus as a place of cultural diversity and religious tolerance is as idealistic as it is erroneous. While there were periods of tolerance towards Jews and Christians, there were periods of persecution. Considering that the Umayyads, the Almoravids, the Almohads, and the Nasrids imposed Maliki Sunnism as the only legal school of law in al-Andalus, life was perilous for non-Maliki Sunnis, Sufis, Kharijites, and Shi‘ites.

Whether one agrees with all of his arguments or not, Tariq Ramadan’s *Radical Reform* is sure to stimulate discussions and debate in many intellectual circles.

Chapter 42

A Debate between Amina Assilmi and Deborah Scroggins¹⁷⁷

On November 7th, 1992, a debate took place at the University of Wisconsin on the issue of “Women’s Rights and Roles in Islam.” The debate took place between Aminah Assilmi, a television writer and producer as well as the director of the International Union of Muslim Women, and Deborah Scroggins, a staff writer for the *Atlantic Journal Constitution*. Both of the participants are highly educated, Amina Assilmi having degrees in Education, Communications, and Broadcasting, and Deborah Scroggins holding a B.A. in History and an M.A. in International Affairs. This latter has written a series of articles in the *Atlantic Journal Constitution* essentially portraying Muslim women as being the most oppressed creatures in the world, directly attributing the root of their oppression to none other than the Holy Qur’an and the religion of Islam.

Aminah Assilmi took on the task of confronting these allegations, presenting clear and well-founded arguments defending the Islamic worldview, and establishing a difference between the teachings of Islam, *shari’ah* laws, and the un-Islamic “cultural contamination” which is responsible, in some cases, for some oppressive ideas which have unfortunately become legislation, and presented as “Islamic laws” in certain Muslim-populated countries. Although many issues were touched upon in the debate, the main issues we will present here are: 1) the question of women’s equality with men, 2) *hijab*, 3) *zina* or adultery laws, and finally 4) inheritance laws, divorce, polygyny, and sexual segregation.

Deborah Scroggins addressed the issue of the Qur’anic verses dealing with the status of women, and how they have been interpreted by some to make women somehow unequal to men. This was refuted by Assilmi who demonstrated that being equal does not imply being identical. The Holy Qur’an mentions that men have a degree over women (2:228); but that does not mean in “superiority,” but rather, in “responsibility.” Assilmi goes on to list the numerous responsibilities that a Muslim man has compared to the relatively few obligations of a Muslim woman. A man, she explains, is responsible for himself, his wife and children, his parents and grand-parents, his wife’s parents, and so on, while a woman is responsible essentially for her own behavior.

Deborah Scroggins pointed out that this “degree” of men over women has resulted in legalizing obedience to women to their husbands, and manifests itself in laws

¹⁷⁷ This video review was originally published in April 1996 in *Mahjubah* 15.4 (143): 3-5.

in Pakistan and Iran forbidding women to travel without the permission of their husbands, fathers or male guardians, depending on the case. The issue was not addressed directly by Assilmi but it is worth discussing here. A person who is born Muslim or becomes a Muslim is expected to abide by Islamic laws. Hence, a woman must obey her husband in all that is Islamic, but it is here obligation to disobey him if he tries to involve her in anything which is contrary to Islam. Of course, with every right comes obligations, and a man may only exert his right over his wife if he fulfils his obligations towards her. For example, if a husband does not financially support his wife, he has no say as to her freedom of movement. If, in the early days of Islam, women were exhorted to only travel in the company of male relatives, it was because the Muslims were at war, and women risked being taken as slaves by their enemies. When viewed within its historical context, this rule was not oppressive. It was a manifestation of Islam's love for its womenfolk, which wants protect from any possible hazards to their lives, honor, and property. It was protection, not oppression. Where such conditions do not exist, however, such restrictions do not apply. Furthermore, the Prophet insisted that women were allowed to leave their homes for professional and personal purposes.

In order to further substantiate the Islamic worldview, Assilmi presented the reality of women's exalted role in Islam quoting from the relevant Qur'anic verses and from the *ahadith* or traditions of the Holy Prophet. She explains that Islam has recognized the testimony of women, admitting that in certain cases the *shari'ah* requires two female testimonies when only one male is required. Nevertheless, in other cases, her testimony is considered of equal value, and in one particular case, it is actually stronger than the man's. Assilmi informs her audience about the Muslim woman's obligation to education, her right to divorce, her right to equal pay, and her right to agree to a marriage or to refuse. She points out that, according to Holy Qur'an, women are not responsible for bringing sin into the world. The Muslim Scripture stresses that both Adam and Eve were tempted, both wronged themselves, both repented, and both were forgiven (7:19-25; 20:120-123). In the eyes of Allah, she explains, men and women are the same in terms of obligations: they get the same rewards for the same acts, and they both have the same chances of going to Heaven. Assilmi also gives examples of women intellectuals in Islam, and shows how Muslim women have been able to plead their cases, present their arguments, and complain to the leader of the Muslim Ummah without any fear. She goes on to note that 1,400 years ago, Islam gave women complete and total property rights. As such, Muslim women have the right to use and dispose of their assets freely. Assilmi also

points out that, in 1870, Great Britain passed the *Married Women's Property Act*, which resulted in quite a scandal. Even nowadays, in some parts of the developed world, women do not have complete rights over their assets. It becomes clear from Assilmi's arguments that there is no question of inequality of women in Islam.

Assilmi refutes such preposterous statements regarding the oppression of women in Islam at the beginning of her introduction, proudly proclaiming that her head-scarf was her "badge of honor," which did not impede her from being an active person, which was not imposed, but rather a declaration of her faith, and a manifestation of her dignity. She exposes the harsh reality of discrimination against *hijab*-wearing Muslim women in the West, explaining how it is virtually impossible for them to get jobs, unless they bare themselves, how they are laughed at, feared, and in the worst of cases, harassed. This, she decries, is an abuse of her human rights, something which deeply offends this obviously sensitive woman. Scroggins eventually agrees that women should have the right to wear *hijab* if they pleased, but dislikes its imposition on women who do not wish to wear it. This rebuttal was not directly answered by Assilmi, but it deserves some elaboration.

All societies have standards. Even in the West, plazas and restaurants have standards of dress. One cannot enter certain places without wearing shoes or a shirt. Certain places require dress shoes, and some even require a shirt and a tie. We can list many examples of dress standards required indoors and outdoors. Islam has its own standards. These standards may be much more conservative than those of other cultures, but they must be respected. One must abide by the laws of the country in which one lives. In the case of a Muslim, one cannot obey the un-Islamic ones. The same principle applies to someone who chooses to live in an Islamic state governed by Islamic law: one must conform or choose to live elsewhere. It is as simple as that. Furthermore, there is no law obliging Muslim women to veil themselves in Western countries. Those who do so are not being forced by anyone. They do so out of their own free will. So, why shout that they are oppressed?

Another issue that was raised was the *zina* or adultery laws. Scroggins went on to defend the "freedom to fornicate," something which Assilmi refuted intelligently. Fornication or adultery is not an individual act as it affects all of society is destructive. It affects the entire family and the society as a whole. It is thus a crime against society and results in the problem of illegitimate children which, in most non-Muslim societies, have essentially no rights. The crisis of single mothers cannot be overlooked, considering that most of the fathers do not pay support payments to their children born out of wedlock.

This is concrete oppression against women. Under Islamic law, it is the man's responsibility to support all of his offspring.

Scroggins pointed out the sad reality that adultery and rape laws have been fused in Pakistan, so that if a woman claims to have been raped, yet cannot bring forth four male witnesses to the act, she will receive the punishment of a fornicator or an adulterer and find herself among the ranks of thousands of women who have been imprisoned for periods of ten years for such "crimes." Assilmi rightfully declared that the Pakistan *zina* laws are un-Islamic and are the direct manifestation of cultural oppression. The organization she heads has been fighting against such "cultural horrors" and has even pleaded their case before the courts in Pakistan, showing to them the relevant Qur'anic verses. The Holy Qur'an states that if a woman is accused of adultery, and there are no witnesses, her testimony is worth more than her accuser's. If she declares her innocence four times, and on the fifth time invokes the wrath of Allah upon herself if she is lying, she is considered innocent (24:8-9). Assilmi admits, though, that the problem is not particularly easy to resolve in such countries as the root of the problem is the peoples own ignorance of Islam.

Scroggins expressed her belief that it was unfair that a Muslim man is allowed to divorce his wife in a direct, immediate, manner, whereas a woman must go through litigation. Assilmi has pointed out the Qur'anic point of view earlier in her discussion, stressing that a Muslim man was not allowed to irrevocably divorce her wife in one shot. Rather, an irrevocable divorce required three readings of the divorce formula on three different occasions (2:228). It is true, though, that this has been shortened to a mere one time recitation among Sunni Muslims who have become distanced from, or who are ignorant of, the Holy Qur'an. This is another problem that needs to be resolved by returning to the Book of Allah.

As to inheritance, Scroggins feels that it is somehow unfair that men received more than women. The reasons for this become clear when one examines the financial obligations of a Muslim man compared to those of a Muslim woman. A Muslim man must support his entire family while a Muslim woman has no such obligation. Even if she works, the money that she earns is her personal property and she can use it as she pleases. It is not her obligation to pay a penny towards her maintenance or that of her family. Assilmi pointed out, though, that it is a shame that people keep overlooking the fact that women were actually included in the inheritance. In many parts of the world, the inheritance goes directly to the eldest son. Families are torn apart because of inheritance.

Islam has made it a clear cut affair: the problems are already fixed. Furthermore, Islamic inheritance laws apply only in Islamic states ruled by Islamic laws. They do not apply outside in the Western world where one can divide one's inheritance as one wishes.

Scroggins also felt that the fact that Muslim men can have up to four wives while Muslim women cannot was somehow "unfair." It does not take a highly intelligent person to comprehend that polyandry can only result in a society of chaos. If a woman copulates with several husbands, there is no way to determine the father of her children and who has obligations towards them. Polyandry goes against the laws of nature, whereas polygyny takes into consideration man's natural drives, limiting them, and setting out criteria and obligations.

The issue of sexual segregation was the final one to be addressed in the debate. Assilmi expressed to Scroggins that she was opposed to strict sexual segregation. She supports sexual segregation in the cases of dancing and socializing, but feels that it is not necessary in the work place, in a professional capacity or in an educational environment. She explained that strict isolation of women, known as *purdah*, actually originates from cultures outside of Islam.

In no place in this brief, but highly informative debate, does Assilmi deny that there are outright cases of oppression of women in many Muslim countries. What she has aimed to do is establish the origins and causes of such oppression. Many of the oppressive legislation against women in certain Muslim-populated countries is a direct manifestation of cultural oppression. It is unfortunate that such oppressive measures are called "Islamic." One of the most terrible problems facing Muslims is cultural contamination in which Muslims from particular backgrounds want to justify their cultures claiming that they are Islamic. The fact of the matter is that there is no such thing as an Islamic culture. What Islam is meant to be is a determining factor in particular cultures which determines what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. The one thing all Muslims have in common is their high esteem for the Holy Qur'an. Once Muslims can free themselves from the shackles of ignorance and return to the Holy Qur'an, then, and only then, will they be able to resolve some of these problems which are contaminating the Muslim Ummah.

It cannot be denied that there is oppression of women in Muslim-populated countries, but Islam is not to blame. When we speak about Islam, we speak about Islam: the ideal. It is the true teachings of Islam that the world Islamic movement is fighting to implement. Muslims are unfortunately the only people whose faults and shortcomings are

blamed on their religion. Anything negative existing within their cultures is blamed on their faith. When someone from a Muslim background commits an act of terrorism, he is labeled a “Muslim terrorist,” an “Islamic fundamentalist,” and a “religious extremist.” When tyrants, oppressors and murderers from the West commit atrocities they are never labeled as “Christian terrorists.” Muslims have unfortunately been made victims of a slanderous propaganda scheme which is determined to dirty the image of Islam.

Are women not oppressed in Western countries? They most certainly are. Women have been the victims of oppression since the dawn of humankind. Women were slaves, oppressed, and exploited in the past, and now they are slaves, exploited, and oppressed in the name of “women’s liberation,” “liberty,” and “freedom.” If we look closely at the ideology of Islam, it will become clear to any open-minded person that Islam is not the terrible oppressor of women, but her greatest liberator, which enables her to recover her honor, her dignity, and her rights. Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world, and the fastest growing religion in the United States. Over two-thirds of converts to Islam in the West are women, and most of them are highly educated. Faced with such statistics, one must ask oneself a very simple question: How can it be that women are at the forefront of a movement that allegedly oppresses them?

Chapter 43

Islam and Social Work¹⁷⁸

Islam and Social Work: Debating Values, Transforming Practice by Sara Crabtree, Fatima Husain and Basia Spalek is divided into eight sections which provide an understanding of key Islamic concepts in different areas such as marriage, family and health. According to the authors, every social worker needs to be familiar with the aforementioned concepts whenever they are dealing with Muslim clients. Throughout the eight sections the authors define the pillars and values of Islam and shed light on the real meaning of some words which have become highly mediatized after September 11th, such as *jihad*, *niqab*, honor, women's rights, marital violence and homosexuality.

In the introduction, the authors provide an overview of the book and their approach. The second section addressed the key concepts found in the Muslim Ummah. The third section covers social work education in Islam. The fourth section addresses gender relations and the centrality of the family while the fifth examines some of the common issues that social workers come across when working with Muslim families. The sixth section studies health issues while the seventh focuses on crime, victimization, and criminal justice in Muslim communities. In the conclusion, the authors suggest areas in which future research would prove fruitful.

Overall, the authors have succeeded in providing the reader with a simplified overview of some basic Islamic concepts. Social workers who are not familiar with Islam should not assume that they will be able to understand Muslims simply by reading this book. Any such readers should be aware that the concepts presented by the authors are far more complex than they have been presented. Furthermore, many of the interpretations provided have undergone various degrees of cultural influence. Rather than refer to the religious authorities of the Sunnis, Shi'ites and Sufis, and instead of drawing from the Qur'an, the Hadith, and the Shari'ah, the authors appear to have relied on the interpretations of Islam made by people who have no expertise in the matter. Although it would have been beneficial for the authors to go deeper into the meaning of some concepts, this may have been impossible, and perhaps ill-advised, since the field of Islamic Studies seems to be well outside of the specialization of these social workers.

¹⁷⁸ This book review of *Islam and Social Work: Debating Values, Transforming Practice* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2008) by S. Crabtree, F. Husain, and B. Spalek was published in *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 26.3 (2009): 144-146. It was written by Rachida Bejja and edited by Dr. John Andrew Morrow.

For reasons which are difficult to explain, the authors opted to use English words to convey technical Arabic terms. In so doing, however, they ended up translating terms in such a way that does not reflect their original meaning. Throughout the book, the authors refer to the “veil” (28-9, 81, 82-5) a description which is misleading. Islamic modest dress mandates that Muslim women cover their hair and their bodies, with the exception of their hands. By referring to the veil, the authors may give the impression that the only thing a Muslim woman has to cover is her hair. At the very least, the authors should simply have spoken of *hijab* since the term “veil” can apply to both the head-scarf or *khimar* and the face-veil or *niqab*. They should also have made an attempt to distinguish between strictly Islamic practices and pre-Islamic cultural customs.

It was as surprising as it was shocking that the authors spoke of “vengeance” as opposed to *qisas* (91-92). Before Islam, the Arabs had a long history of tribal warfare. With the advent of Islam, however, the Prophet Muhammad opposed vengeance between individuals and tribes and instituted the Islamic concept of *qisas* which is a law that regulates disputes. In pre-Islamic times, it was simply an eye for an eye. Revenge was blind. In Islam, however, it is only the murderer who can be put to death. Furthermore, Islam also distinguishes between first degree murder, second degree murder, and accidental homicide. The law of *qisas* is the law of equity, not the law of reciprocity, and cannot be translated as “revenge.” The authors do not take into consideration these complexities.

Most of the case studies provided in the book reflect the cultural concepts of certain families and communities as opposed to the values embodied in Islam. Thus, the very title of the book is problematic as it contradicts its contents. The book is supposed to be about Islam and social work. However, for the book to be about Islam, it needs to distinguish between Islam and culture, something which it simply does not do, for which reason it might have been best to title it *Muslims and Social Work* since Islam is one thing, while Muslims are another thing all together.

Besides failing to appropriately address the influence of culture on behavior, they also describe certain customs as Islamic when they simply are not. A good example of confusing Islam and culture is the phenomenon of genital mutilation which the authors describe as a *sunnah* (132), when it represents a pre-Islamic pagan practice of African origin which has no basis whatsoever in the Qur’an and the authentic traditions of the Prophet.

Although the authors provide some important guidelines to help social workers deal with Muslim clients, it is well-known that individuals from the same culture and religion differ greatly. Hence, you cannot apply the guidelines they have given to every single Muslim individual or family. Rather, social workers need to treat every single client as an individual.

Finally, although the publisher claims that *Islam and Social Work* is “the only book specifically about social work with Muslims communities,” this claim does not pass the test of a simple search engine. Although there were far fewer studies on the subject several decades ago, an enormous amount of scholarship has been published dealing specifically with social work among Muslims in English, French, German, Spanish, Arabic, among other languages.

In spite of its shortcomings in both style and content, *Islam and Social Work* exposes social workers to a critically important subject: the difficulties faced by Muslims when attempting to integrate into Western culture while preserving their Islamic values. The work by Crabtree, Husain, and Spalek, may help expand the horizons of some social workers, help them view Muslims as ordinary human beings with hopes and aspirations as opposed to opponents or enemies of Western civilization. The authors, in particular, should be praised for presenting a more humanized image of Muslims communities, something which stands in stark contrast to the stereotypes which saturate the mass media.

Chapter 44

Can Islam be French?¹⁷⁹

Can Islam be French? by John R. Bowen is divided into three parts. The first part, which includes chapters one and two, provides a brief overview of Islam in France, addresses issues of migration, the rise of religion, the response of the state, and the distinctive features of the French Islamic landscape.

The second part consists of four chapters. Chapter Three explores Islam in the French suburbs, Islamic networks, and the work of an everyday Imam, as well as mosques and social divisions. Chapter Four examines the forces which shape Islamic knowledge in France, the various rules, schools, and principles used to interpret Islam, Hichem El Arafa's CERSI, the science of prophetic traditions, and the objectives of Scripture. Chapter Five differentiates between the various schools of jurisprudence in Islam, the differing pedagogical approaches employed in teaching the Muslim faith, the major influence of the Maliki madhhab in France, and the practical training of preachers and scholars. Chapter Six wonders whether Islamic schools can really be republican. It examines the case of Dhaou Meskine's Success School, how Muslim schools manage to teach a secular curriculum, Muslim family camp, and closes with coverage of Dhaou's arrest.

Part three includes three chapters. Chapter Seven wonders whether there should be an Islam for Europe, whether there should be different rules for different lands, ideological confrontations in mosques, and the transnational Islamic sphere. Chapter Eight deals with issues such as secular and religious marriages, halal and haram food rules, as well as the attitude of French civil law towards Islamic practices. Finally, Chapter Nine tackles Islamic spheres in republican space, whether religion-based associations impede integration, priorities and values, as well as pragmatics of convergence.

Bowen's relatively well-written work provides an overview of the Islamic landscape in France, and the problems confronting the Muslim population in the country. Almost exclusively descriptive, the book is virtually devoid of an authorial voice. While the author can be praised for his apparent objectivity, in which he primarily presents the French and Muslim perspectives on various issues, he can also be criticized for providing

¹⁷⁹ This book review of John R. Bowen's *Can Islam be French?* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton UP, 2010) was originally published in the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 27.4 (2010): 120-122.

little to nothing in the way of analysis and commentary. By focusing on presenting the facts, without advancing an overt argument in defense of either the secular French or the French Muslim community, the author essentially says: “Come to your own conclusions.” Rather than bridge the divide or express sympathy or support for a community under attack by racist secularists, the author selects to be silent on many subjects, a passive position that many readers will find frankly infuriating.

The field work completed by the author is certainly of value, but almost exclusively for those who are unfamiliar with the issues at hand. Written primarily for an uninformed American audience, the book provides information that is already well-known to specialists, the French--both secularists and Muslims--informed individuals in the Maghreb, as well as politically-sensitive media watcher from around the world.

Despite providing a good overview of the interpretive chaos which reigns within the French Sunni community--in which opinions range from the extreme fundamentalism of the Salafis to some type of deformed, state-supported, secularized, liberal Islam--the author has ignored the Shi‘ite community in France which has a strong, structured, leadership, with an uninterrupted tradition of *ijtihad* or interpretation of Islamic law to new and changing realities. If Bowen presented the secularist voice in *Why the French Don’t like Headscarves*, and wanted to present the Muslim voice in *Can Islam be French?*, he should have provided a more complete profile of the Islamic community without ignoring the smaller, but equally significant, Shi‘ite perspective.

Although subtle in argument, Bowen suggests that Islamic values and French secularism could be compatible on the condition that both sides make concessions. While it is true that some Muslims hold the most backwards cultural customs which deserve to be denounced, it is clear that it is the Islam as a whole that is under attack in France. If anything, sensitive readers feel a sense of siege when they read Bowen’s book. As the facts presented by the author make explicitly clear, it is not only “religious symbols” like the headscarf that the secular French don’t like. They are now actively attacking the Islamic institution of marriage and divorce (158-64), halal food rules (165-172), and the prohibition against usury (137). They also aggressively oppose the presence of mosques and minarets (193) which are “incompatible” with the French architectural landscape (22). Some French legal scholars believe that Islamic marriages and divorces conducted abroad should not be considered valid when one or both parties come to France (173). As the author exposes, the French government is even pursuing Muslim into the personal realm, accusing them of “assimilation defects” for failing to replace their old Islamic

values with new French ones (191). Valuing virginity is viewed as a “retrograde value” (192), requests by Jewish and Muslim women for private swimming sessions are met with anger (195), while wearing a face-veil and opting to be a housewife is cause for having one’s citizenship denied (192).

Rather than rationalizing the reasons for French anti-Muslimism and addressing issues of Islamic apologetics, scholars should focus more on the historical, sociological, and psychological roots of French anti-Islamism, paralleling the plight of the Muslims in France with the condition of Jews in Nazi Germany. Much like the Nuremberg Laws, which aimed to exclude Jewish people from civic life, the French laws aimed against expressions of Islam seek to exclude Muslims from active participation in French social, economic, and educational life, something Québécois nationalists, American Republicans, and Tea-Baggers seek to replicate in North America. Following in the footsteps of the French, many French Canadians in Québec have brought the battle over “reasonable accommodations” to the province in an attempt to antagonize its Muslim minority. Inspired by the increased tolerance for intolerance seen in Europe and elsewhere, extreme right-wing rhetoric has greatly increased in the United States, reminding many historically-informed individuals of the anti-Jewish hate propaganda spread by the Nazis. Although valuable sources of information, works like those of Bowen miss the critically important issues by a mile.

Chapter 45

Gobineau and Orientalism¹⁸⁰

Comte de Gobineau and Orientalism: Selected Eastern Writings makes available sizeable extracts from two of Joseph Arthur de Gobineau's most important works: *Trois ans en Asie* and *Les religions et philosophies dans l'Asie central*. Part 1, featuring selections from the first work, includes chapters on "The Nation," "Religion," "The Sufis," "The Condition of Individuals," "Characters and Social Relations," and "Probable Results of Relations between Europe and Asia." Part 2, featuring selections from the second work, includes chapters on "The Religious and Moral Character of Asiatics," "The Faith of the Arabs: Origin and Development of Shi'ism," "Beginnings of Babism," "The Development of Babism," "Battles and Successes of the Babis in Mazandaran," "Fall of the Castle of Shaykh Tabarsi," and "Insurrection in Zanzan," as well as "Attempt on the king's life." Although these studies are well-known to specialists, they were previously unavailable in English. As such, O'Donoghue's translation makes an important contribution to scholarship.

Although described as "brilliant," O'Donoghue's translation would best be described as competent. As the translator notes, "I have endeavored to translate Gobineau as accurately as possible with regard to style and word choice. This had led to a certain amount of obscure vocabulary and idiosyncratic syntax...and some very long sentences containing many subordinate clauses (viii). Still, if Tim Mackintosh-Smith could render the long-winded narrative style of Ibn Battuta's *Travels* into clear, concise, and readable modern English, the same should be expected of any translator. While we can tolerate the author and the editor's desire to "transliterate Arabic and Persian words broadly," there seems no logical explanation for the spelling of "Shi'ih" with a *ta marbuta*.

If the translation is valuable, the editorial notes by Geoffrey Nash are of little consequence. Since several of the studies attempt to trace the original and early development of Shi'ism, the dearth of primary Shi'ite sources in his bibliography pose a serious problem. Virtually every work he cites was produced by an Orientalist and his main source of information on Shi'ism derives from *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, the work of Moojan Momen, a Baha'i activist. Due to his shortage of scholarly sources, Nash simply reiterates the many mistakes made by Momen. For example, he reiterates the

¹⁸⁰ Gobineau, Joseph Arthur de. *Comte de Gobineau and Orientalism: Selected Eastern Writings*. Trans. Daniel O'Donoghue. Ed. Geoffrey Nash. New York: Routledge, 2009.

outdated and duly debunked claim that Abdulla ibn Saba is the source of Shi'ite extremism [ghuluww] (219, note 7). He also repeats Momen's assertion that extremist views were widespread in the period up to the Sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq, only to reversed thereafter due to doctrinal changes (218, note 3).

The editor also speaks of a certain "Salman Irani" (225, note 10) when his real name was Salman al-Farisi. The term *Irani*, which is derived from the Old Iranian ethical adjective *Aryana* or "Aryan," traces back to Sassanid time. It was only in 1935 that Reza Shah, in a desire to stress the Aryan origin of the Persian people, asked the international community to refer to Persia as Iran and Persians as Iranians. Since the term *eran*, as an identifier for the Persian people, is only first attested in an inscription from the time of Ardashir I (d. 242), it seems highly improbable that Salman, the Companion of the Prophet, could have bore the titled *al-Irani* or "the Iranian." In fact, all primary Islamic sources refer to him as *al-Farisi* or "the Persian."

Furthermore, with the exception of the works of Gobineau, all of the editor's sources are in English. Surely, the serious study of any subject requires the use of primary sources. Despite this feeble bibliographical foundation, Nash provides an excellent overview of Gobineau's ideas and some of the serious shortcomings of his works. In fact, some may find that the editor's introduction does such a fine job at summarizing and studying the translated extracts that it steals the show.

Considering the size of *Trois ans en Asie* and *Les religions et philosophies dans l'Asie central*, some scholars will not be satisfied with the selections provided by Geoffrey Nash. Although Gobineau provided a veritable panorama of Persian culture, nearly 43% of the excerpts selected by Nash deal with Baha'ism. Although scholars of Baha'ism will be pleased with the proliferation of information regarding the formation of this faith, others may suggest that the selection reflects a Baha'i bias coming from the author of such works as *The Phoenix and the Ashes: The Baha'i Faith and the Modern Apocalypse* and *Iran's Secret Pogrom: The Conspiracy to Wipe Out the Baha'is*. In short, the "Selected Eastern writings" will seem far too "selective" for some. Fortunately, for those who wish a fuller picture of Gobineau, O'Donoghue plans to publish his complete translations of *Three Years in Asia* and *Religions and Philosophies of Central Asia*, removing, due to contractual obligations, the short selections that have been previously published. The first of these planned publications, *Gobineau and Persia: A Love Story*, is set to be published by Mazda Publisher in 2011.

Setting the shortcomings of the translator and the editor aside, any major criticism should be directed towards the theories expounded upon by Gobineau himself. Most Anglophone scholars, who do not have reading comprehension of French, will be familiar with Gobineau's *Inequality of Human Races*, and his reputation as "the father of racist ideology." Although Gobineau spreads all sorts of stereotypes regarding Persians and other ethnic groups (33, 85, 105, 108), the author is, in many regards, sympathetic to his subjects (3). It should be remembered that this is a man who, since he was a child, loved the East, called himself a Muslim, and yearned to make the pilgrimage to Mecca (2). He was also highly critical of European imperialism (3). Despite the sensitivity he often showed for his subjects, Gobineau made some monumental mistakes regarding Shi'ism and Sufism.

Although he provided little to no evidence to substantiate his claims, Gobineau advanced the theory that Shi'ism was a Persian response to the Arab conquest. He asserts that the attraction the Persians feel for Ali was "a sort of disguised protest against the Arabs and therefore against Islam itself" (37), that Persian nationality manifests itself in the veneration of the Imams "which borders on worship" (26), and that this "cult of the Imams" places them above the Prophet (38). For Gobineau, Shi'ism, that "strangely disfigured Islam" (133) "that would have been unrecognizable to Muhammad" (37) is "full of sentiments, ideas, prescriptions borrowed from Magism" (63). In short, Gobineau believes that the Sassanid religion was more or less resurrected as Shi'ism (131).

According to Gobineau "The only way...of understanding Persian ideas in matters of faith is to consider...suppressed cults or beliefs" (41). He insists that "*Kitman* serves as a kind of perpetual carnival" (122) and that the Persians engage in some sort of collective hypocrisy (8, 35). He claims that the Persians care more about Jamshid and Cyrus than about the Prophet (25). He shares the belief of a Sufi who claimed that there was not a single absolute Muslim in all of Persia (122). Since the Persians have such a predilection for preserving and practicing secret suppressed religions, Gobineau concludes that "the masses are in reality not Muslim" (41). He even attributes the origin of several Shi'ite sects stretching as far as Syria to the Persian partiality for the descendants of 'Ali (38). As historians are aware, and Gobineau most certainly ignored, the Persian masses only embraced Shi'ism after the Safavids, who ruled from 1501-1736, imposed Twelver Shi'ism as their state religion. Prior to this period, the most important Shi'ite scholars had been Arabs (218).

Basing himself on oral sources, Gobineau attributes extremist ideas to mainstream Twelver Shi'ites. When speaking of the Imams, he claims that "The world is preserved, justified, directly led only by them and their actions" (132). This belief, of course, belongs to a group of extremist Shi'ites known as the *mufawwidah* or delegators. The notion that the world is sustained by the Imams is also attributed to the Shaykhis. This extremist doctrine, however, is anathema to Twelver Shi'ite theologians. Gobineau also claims that in Shi'ism, "reading the Koran without the participation of a mullah was a grave heresy" (37) and can lead to "excommunication" (131). It suffices to say that no Shiite scholar has ever taken such a stance. Although a process of excommunication exists among the Isma'ilis, no such practice exists in Twelver Shi'ism.

The French Orientalist also asserts that "other than in Persia Islam has no priests and no provision for them" (37). Twelver Shi'ism is not structured like a Church. Shi'ites do not have priests and clerics: they have scholars. These scholars are not appointed from above, but rise up in rank on the basis of their academic achievements. Shiite scholars are primarily jurists and not intermediaries or intercessors with the Divine. The most learned of them are followed exclusively in matters of law, not articles of faith. Furthermore, Shi'ites are free to select the jurist they wish to emulate, and can change their legal allegiance at any time. The claim that Shi'ites have a priesthood is incorrect and represents the imposition of a Catholic construct on Shi'ite Islam.

Gobineau provides a particularly harsh assessment of the Shi'ite scholars of his times. He states that "the Muslim clergy of Persia largely merits the disdain and hatred it inspires" (40). While he admits that there may be some exceptions, he stresses that he has not seen any and that, even were they to exist, they cannot redeem an entire corps (41). Since Gobineau lived from 1816-1882, and served as the first secretary in the French embassy in Tehran from 1855-1856, as *chargé d'affaires* until 1858, and then as minister to Persia in 1862-1863, he was a contemporary of leading Shi'ite scholars such as Muhammad-Hasan al-Najafi (de. 1849), Shaykh Murtada al-Ansari (d. 1864), Muhammad Mahdi al-Qazvini (de. 1882), Muhammad al-Irvani (d. 1888), Hasan al-Shirazi (d. 1894), Muhammad-Hasan al-Mamaqani (d. 1895), Jamal al-Din al-Asadabadi (1838-1897), Muhammad al-Shirazi (d. 1896), Husayn al-Tihirani (de. 1908), Fazlollah Nuri (1843-1909), Muhammad-Kazim al-Yazdi (d. 1918), and Muhammad Taqi al-Shirazi (d. 1919). While there are always bad apples, such as court clerics and quietists, condemning the entire class of Shi'ite scholars is inappropriate.

Besides attacking the '*ulama*', Gobineau attempts to undermine the sources which they employ. He claims that Shi'ite scholars developed their doctrines on the basis of a multitude of *hadiths* "of which no one but themselves in the entire Muslim world has ever heard, and multiplying those traditions according to their needs" resulting in "voluminous collections as to defy the imagination" (37). Evidently, if Gobineau had any familiarity with Sunni and Shi'i sources, he would have known that there is an enormous degree of overlap between both bodies of traditions and that the majority of spurious sayings were excluded from the canonical books of traditions.

Although millions of traditions were circulating during the early centuries of Islam, only a small percentage of them were authentic. Bukhari, for example, collected more than 600,000 traditions, and only accepted 7,275 as authentic, many of which are repetitions, bringing the total number of trustworthy traditions to 3,000. Abu Dawud accepted only 4,800 traditions out of 50,000. The main *hadith* collection accepted by the 'Ibadis contains 1,005 authentic traditions. According to an 'Ibadi tradition, there are only 4,000 authentic traditions in total. As for Kulayni, he collected 15,176 traditions of which 5,072 are considered authentic. So, there is no question that hundreds of thousands of sayings were falsely attributed to the Prophet and the Imams. Still, the overwhelming majority of these spurious sayings were long suppressed from the canonical books of traditions. What remains are mostly authentic, good, and weak narrations.

The mistakes made by Gobineau are virtually interminable. Not only is misinformed about the Shaykhis (41-42), he gets the Usuli-Akhbari dispute all wrong (9), and falsely attributes the belief in the ritual impurity of infidels and certain animals to Magism (63). He is particularly harsh on the Arabs alleging that they did not create anything new, but merely incorporated remnants of conquered civilizations (7). Consequently, there is no such thing as "Islamic" civilization (7). Gobineau describes Sunni Islam as a "meagre and very dry branch of Chaldaism" (123). He claims that Islamism is vague and uncertain, that it has inconsistent principles, that its moral teaching is imperfect, and that it has no sense of justice (128-129). He also asserts that the Islamic empire, which stretched from Spain to India, suffocated Muslims under its dominion (131). He even claims that Persians "arise from a mixture of Arabic speaking and consequently Semitic multitudes" (30). Evidently, historical, linguistic, and DNA studies certainly do not support this. If the Shi'ites seem hard hit, Gobineau claims that Sufis are not Muslims (38, 43). He sums up Sufism as the bringer of "Quietism, beng and opium" (10), evidently unaware that some of the greatest soldiers of Islam were Sufis,

including Imam Shamil (1797-1871) and Omar Mokhtar (1862-1931), among legions of others ferocious fighters from the day of Islam to the present day.

Gobineau also makes the strange assertion that the Qur'an adopted a "talismanic style" filled with alliteration (127). For a person who claims to have read the Qur'an under the guidance of a mullah, Gobineau seems to have little sense of the style of the scripture. And, just when he thinks he has convinced the credulous reader that Shi'ism is simply some secret form of Zoroastrianism; he professes that "Persian Islam is half Hindu" (47). He argues that "the continual movement of heresies that torment the Muslim world, particularly in Persia, and which at every moment revives, reawakens, renews, or imports notions of Indian theology into Koranic law" (80).

When speaking of Persian culture and society, Gobineau makes a number of outlandish claims. He asserts that, at the age of seven or eight, boys receive a woman to take care of them, and that these women are wives (92). Clearly, the women in question are nannies, and not spouses. He also claims that "It is unusual for a woman to reach the age of twenty-three or four without having had a least two husbands, and often many more, for divorces are obtained with excessive facility" (92). In this case, he refers to a real practice, that of fixed-term marriages, but ignores that they do not end in divorce but expire, and greatly exaggerates their prevalence. According to Gobineau, "The custom still exists in Persia of taking a husband to make the pilgrimage to Karbala or Mecca when the real husband is unable to accompany his wife; but upon return the temporary husband ceases to be part of the family" (93). This comically claim, namely, that married women can taken temporary husbands, may have been inspired by the practice of marrying single women to older, married men, while performing pilgrimages. These contracts stipulate that no sexual relations will take place and the "husband" really assumes the role of a *mahram* relative, thus permitting the woman in question to share the same living accommodations during her travels. After engaging in a long-series of disparaging remarks regarding Persian women, Gobineau surprisingly states that "in my quality as a European I have seen none of them and speak by mere hearsay" (94).

Evidently, not all is erroneous in Gobineau. He was one of the first observers to point out the widespread use of the Allah lexicon among the Persians, particularly in the use of expressions such as *inshallah*, *mashallah*, *khudavand-i alam*, *hazrat-i payghambar* and *salvat allah ali hu ala* (35). The last transliteration, in particular, demonstrates Gobineau inability to properly decipher Persian pronunciation. As all Iranians are aware, the words are *salvat Allah alayhi va ala aalih*. As significant as the Allah Lexicon may be

to Muslims, Gobineau is quick to dismiss the sincerity of these sayings, asserting that “scarcely one out of twenty Persians corresponding to his portrait believes what he is saying” (35). He does provide some inside information regarding the Ahl-i Haqq which he obtained from his valet, who was a “saint” or leader in the cult (45-64). Gobineau is also an important source on the early history of Baha’ism.

Like a mad genius in the process of brainstorming, and coming up with all kinds of absurd ideas, Gobineau occasionally shows signs of insight. Properly disciplined, controlled, and directed, some of these disjointed ideas could have been developed into something meaningful. His claim that Catholic religious dramas were borrowed from Shi’ite *taziyas* is interesting (116). According to available evidence, however, the flagellation rituals which take place during ‘*Ashura*’ were only introduced in the 1500s by Shi’ite extremists of Turkish extraction who may have adopted the practice from Christian penitents. Could the process have been the inverse? Could the Christian holy week flagellants been inspired by Shi’ites? The hypothesis deserves more exploration.

Although he thought he was formulating a new theory, Gobineau’s insistence that the Prophet was not illiterate was not novel (125). It is amply supported by Shi’ite sources which stress that the Prophet and the Imams were literate, not only in Arabic, but in virtually every other language imaginable. When speaking of the Arabia, he wrote that “Today there is no less Muslim country in all of Islam” (124), words that ring true to this day. He also presents the Prophet in a positive light, describing him as a serious man of gentle ways, who was selfless, had enormous good will, and a love for justice (128). Although he insists on Muhammad’s authorship of the Qur’an, he recognizes it as a literary masterpiece (126-127). He also accurately assesses the literary value of the Bab’s (1819-1850) books:

The style of ‘Ali Muhammad is dull and lacking in brilliance, of tiresome rigidity, of dubious richness, of suspect correctness. Not all of the many obscure points one finds stem from intention, but rather many of them are merely the manifestation of an obvious incapacity. The Koran has absolutely nothing to fear from the comparison... the Koran, in literary terms, is undeniably the work of a great genius, whereas the Sura of Joseph, or, better said, the commentary thereon, closely resembles the work of a schoolboy. (136)

As mediocre, misinformed, and misguided as Gobineau’s ideas may have been, they were eagerly embraced by his fellow Orientalists. Ernst Renan (1823–1892), Paul Anton de Lagarde (1827-1891), Richard August Reitzenstein (1861-1931), Edgard

Blochet (1870-1937), and Edward Granville Browne (1862-1926) all helped to spread the stubbornly held theory that Shi'ism was a Persian response to the Arab conquest. One of the most important points made by Nash revolves around the ideological inspiration that Gobineau provides to modern-day Iranians secularists and nationalists. As the editor explains,

Gobineau's ideas on Persian race/history might also be said to have filtered directly or indirectly via other western Orientalists through to Iranian secularists and nationalists of the last nineteenth and early twentieth century such as Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani, Ahmad Kasravi and those who today glorify Iran's ancient but condemn its more recent Islamic past. Nikki Keddie has noted the fashion among certain Iranians for 'glorification of ancient Iran and its religion, the hatred of Arabs and their identification with Islam and of both with Iran's downfall.' (14)

Since he greatly exaggerated the differences between Sunnism, Shi'ism, and Sufism, and attempted to place them into racial categories, Gobineau's ideas proved useful for imperialists and missionaries on a mission to divide and conquer the Muslim world. Although he praises the Qur'an and the Prophet, Gobineau undermines both by insisting that Muhammad based the holy book on a combination of Christian Apocrypha, Jewish traditions, and Aramaic philosophy (127). While not the first to make such a claim, Gobineau has certainly inspired the likes of Patricia Crone (b. 1945) and Michael Cook (b. 1940), who argue that Islam is a Jewish heresy, Gerd Rüdiger Puin (b. 1940) and Christoph Luxenberg, who stress the existence of a significant Christian substrate, and John Edward Wansbrough (1928–2002), who emphasizes a Judeo-Christian origin to Islam.

Like many Orientalists, Gobineau had a poor command of Arabic and Persian (212, note 5; 228, note 8; 229, note 16). He favoured imagination and intuition over the scholarly method, basing himself on flights of fancy rather than fact. Although he speaks with authority, his understanding of Islam, in all its expressions, was incomplete, as was his understanding of Muslim cultures in general. His *Religions and Philosophies of Central Asia* reads more like travel literature than scholarship, positioning himself as the outsider who asserts to have seized the essence of the "other" when, in reality, he has scarcely scratched the surface of his subject.

As much as Gobineau may have loved the East, the path to perdition is paved with good intentions. Ultimately, as a result of his influential theories, Gobineau did a

great deal of damage to Islam and Muslims. The stereotypes he sowed, and the theoretical weeds he planted, have proven exceedingly difficult to uproot. The situation has been further complicated by the fact that his followers have fertilized them for over a century. Far from being beneficial plants, Gobineau's theories deserved to be declared as noxious invasive weeds. For scholars seeking to understand the basis of many Orientalist ideas, and perhaps help to eradicate them, *Comte de Gobineau and Orientalism* is essential reading.

Chapter 46

The Second Assassination of Malcolm X:

A Critical Review of Manning Marable's Biography

After great anticipation, the long-awaited release of Manning Marable's (1950-2011) biography of Malcolm X (1925-1965) has finally arrived, producing deep disappointment as opposed to critical acclaim. Titled *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Viking, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-670-0220-5), the prodigious 594 page product contains 16 chapters, along with a prologue and an epilogue, with titles drawn mostly from quotations, including: "Up, You Mighty Race!," "The Legend of Detroit Red," "Becoming 'X,'" "They Don't Come Like the Minister," "Brother, a Minister *Has* to be Married," "The Hate that Hate Produced," "As Sure as God Made Green Apples," "From Prayer to Protest," "He was Developing Too Fast," "The Chickens Coming Home to Roost," "An Epiphany in the Hajj," "Do Something About Malcolm X," "In the Struggle for Dignity," "Such a Man is Worthy of Death," "Death Comes on Time," and "Life After Death."

Marketed as Manning Marable's "magnum opus" and the "definitive biography" of Malcolm X, the work is filled with more fantasy than fact. Herb Boyd, the author and journalist, stated that he found more than 25 major mistakes in the book, some of which were "absolutely egregious." In reality, the work is littered with masses of mistakes ranging from typos and incorrect page numbers in references to false or questionable information. Karl Evanzz, the author of *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad* and *The Judas Factor: The Plot to Kill Malcolm X* had denounced the work as an "abomination," a "fraud and a failure," as well as "a cavalcade of innuendo and logical fallacy." Rather than rely on trustworthy sources, the biographer makes all sorts of unsubstantiated allegations about Malcolm X based on rumors and gossip from the most specious of sources.

One of the most objectionable aspects of Marable's work is his allegation that Malcolm X was a homosexual. Considering the gravity of the matter, one would expect a serious scholar to provide a strong case based on positive proof.

Marable, however, provides nothing more than circumstantial evidence to support his claims (66). According to Marable, Malcolm X worked as a “butler and occasional house worker” for William Paul Lennon, a wealthy 56-year-old white man (66). While working as Lennon’s “male secretary,” the author alleges that “something deeper than an employer-employee relationship developed” (66). To be blunt, the author asserts that Malcolm X became sexually involved with Lennon (96) and that “he participated in ... paid homosexual encounters” (66). While Malcolm does mention the “powder sessions” that took place at the home of a rich white man in his *Autobiography*, Marable claims that he “falsely attributed them to a character named Rudy” (66). In short, Marable alleges that “Rudy” was a fictitious character that Malcolm invented in order to disassociate himself with the homosexual activity he described and that “Malcolm was probably describing his own homosexual encounters with Paul Lennon” (66). However, as all authoritative accounts explain, “Rudy” appears to be the nickname that Malcolm created for Francis “Sonny” Brown to protect his identity in the same way that he employed the name “Sophia” as a cover for Bea Caragulian, his Armenian lover. According to Malcolm “Shorty” Jarvis, Sonny did indeed exist (46). Whether he was “Rudy” cannot presently be confirmed. Jarvis also mentions that a certain “John R” belonged to their crew (46). Perhaps the “R” was short for “Rudy.” In any event, the existence of “Rudy” can hardly be questioned. He was certainly not Malcolm’s homosexual alter-ego.

Although Marable admits that “[t]here is no evidence from his prison record in Massachusetts or from his personal life after 1952 that he was actively homosexual” (66), he suggests that Malcolm suppressed his sexual orientation for the rest of his life. In fact, this allegation serves as a narrative thread throughout his biography. The author claims that Malcolm wrote several letters to Lennon while in prison (72, 73), and suggests that his gay white lover may have visited him during his incarceration (75). Since Malcolm had stated in a letter that Lennon could give him a “home and a job,” Marable suggests that his “choice of words...implies more than a business association” (96), positing that “Perhaps the physical intimacies between the two men created a bond” (96). The author also

states that, after being released from prison on August 7th, 1952, Malcolm visited a Turkish bath to get the physical feeling of prison taint off of himself (97-98), knowing full well that, in the imagination of most readers, such bath-houses are bastions of homosexuality.

Rather than focus on the public Malcolm, the voyeuristic Marable attempts to peep into the most intimate aspects of his subject's private life in search of evidence to support his theory that he was a sexually repressed homosexual. Seeking to spice up his biography with sexually suggestive imagery of man-on-man action, Marable writes that "While physical contact between genders was prohibited, male-to-male contact, especially within the martial arts context, was routine" (146) in the Nation of Islam. "It was not a surprise to Malcolm, therefore, when some brothers at Temple No. 7" looked at Malcolm as if he had "betrayed them" (146). Marable also reiterates the allegations of homosexuality that Bruce Perry made about Malcolm in his 1991 book without ever once questioning the credibility of his highly suspect sources (506, note 65).

In *Malcolm: The Life of a Man who Changed Black America*, Perry claims that, as a junior high school student, Malcolm X forced a fellow schoolmate named Robert to fellate him (29; 396, note 29). He suggests that, as a teenager, Malcolm slept with Willie Mae, a transvestite known as "Miss Jones" (77). Perry also claims that, during his Detroit Red days, homosexual men used to pay Malcolm to fellate him (77). He also asserts that it was Malcolm, and not only Rudy, who used to massage William Paul Lennon until he climaxed (83). Perry, like Marable, ignores the fact that, according to *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, the man in question was so sensitive that the mere application of talcum powder was sufficient for him to reach climax (140). As Evanzz has pointed out,

[T]here is nothing in Malcolm X's far superior work to suggest that there was any touching of genitalia, let alone oral or anal sodomy. In fact, Malcolm X's autobiography clearly shows (in the chapter titled "Caught") how amusing he found the strange things that made white 'johns' reach orgasm. One man, he wrote, ejaculated by sitting outside a bedroom door listening to a black couple making whoopee.

Perry would even have us believe that Malcolm steered two of his cash-struck Michigan friends from the merchant marine to a homosexual john. In return for performing fellatio on the two heterosexual friends, “Reverend Witherspoon” paid them one week’s rent and a first-rate chicken dinner (77). The allegation simply does not make sense. Since when do straight sailors sell themselves to gay men for food and lodging? When sailors are in port they do not prostitute themselves. On the contrary, they avail themselves of the service of prostitutes. Assuming that this bizarre scenario had substance, what could possibly motivate a person to admit such a thing? If anything, it seems that Perry got played by his paid sources. The individuals he consulted seem to have had a fine time feeding him tall tales in exchange for financial compensation.

Showing a complete and total lack of sensitivity and an absolute lack of understanding of his subject, Perry states that Malcolm sold himself like a prostitute, not out of need, but out of choice (83). As street-wise persons are aware, and academic studies have shown, it is women, not men, who turn to prostitution when put out on the streets. The only men who become homosexual prostitutes are those who were not tough enough to make it as thugs, thieves, and dope-dealers. Since Malcolm X was six foot three inches, and an excellent boxer (Jarvis 39) who could stand his own against any adversary, he does not fit the profile of a man who would turn himself out for tricks. On the street, where one’s reputation is all that one has, a homosexual criminal does not stand a chance. Had Malcom been a queer, he would have lost all of his street credibility. On the street, one is a predator or one is a prey: one takes from others or one gives of oneself.

While Perry presents all these salacious details as if they were fact, they are based on sources completely lacking in credibility. While this might escape the average reader, who might subsequently be mislead into believing that such allegations were true, the notes speak for themselves. The claim that Malcolm forced a schoolmate to fellate him comes from Bob Bebee, a childhood friend, and his younger brother, Ray. It should be noted that neither of these two boys witnessed the act and Perry failed to find Robert, or even determine his last name,

to confirm the claim. The claim that Malcolm has sex with Willie Mae Jones is conveniently based on “[t]wo confidential sources” (412). The allegation that Malcolm X prostituted himself to homosexuals also comes from confidential sources, as well as the testimony of a single supposed friend: Johnny Davis Jr.

As further evidence of Perry’s erroneous approach, the only proof he presented regarding Malcolm’s alleged involvement with Lennon comes from Malcolm “Shorty” Jarvis (83, 413, 414). A former friend of Malcolm from his hustler days, Shorty served as one of Perry informants. As much as he claims that his post-prison association with Malcolm was “spiritually-based, not monetarily based” (132) and that money was not his concern when it came to anything pertaining to Malcolm X, Jarvis admits that Perry, whom he does not mention by name, had promised to pay him \$500 to answer his questions (134). “From the names I was called,” writes Jarvis, “you’d think I tried to rob the Brinks” (134). Had Jarvis been paid \$500,000.00 to share spurious stories about his “best friend” people might have understood. Shorty, however, sold out his homeboy for a promised \$500 that never materialized. As much as he claims to have collaborated with Perry “out of the goodness of my heart and a deep, abiding respect for Malcolm X and all he advocated” (134), one wonders how any true friend could make the type of accusations that he did. Jarvis points out that he was called all kind of names as a result of the allegations he presented to Perry: “I was called ‘a damn fool and an ass,’” he writes (134). Although he admits that, “Well, maybe I was” (134), he insists that “my intentions were honorable” (134).

Supposing that Jarvis was right, and Malcolm did give a hand-job to a gay man when he was a young man, where is the honor in exposing a friend’s secret from decades past? While he was quick to condemn Malcolm when promised money, and perhaps even anonymity, Jarvis refrained from similar attacks in his memoirs. While he was prepared to indict Malcolm in what he probably believed were private communications with Perry, he did not stand behind his story when he was provided with a public forum: his own memoirs. In reality, Jarvis had no first-hand knowledge that Malcolm was physically involved with Lennon. If Jarvis could not get Lennon’s name correct, how could he get his facts correct?

Since Malcolm was a pimp, who provided both female and male prostitutes to his clients, it is possible that he was Lennon's purveyor of male partners. As much as he insisted otherwise, Malcolm "Shorty" Jarvis appears to have been upset at the negative image that was projected of him by Alex Haley and Spike Lee. As he admits, he wrote *The Other Malcolm* was "to set the record straight" about the personality and character of Malcolm "Shorty Jarvis." As much as he cared about his own portrayal, he manifested little consideration for the portrayal of Malcolm X. As talented a jazz musician as he may have been, Jarvis may have been jealous of the meteoric rise of his former friend and marred by his own personal failures.

Rather than examine the sources employed by Perry, Marable seeks to strengthen them by stating that "other evidence has surfaced that supports his general assertions" (506). He writes that "Malcolm revealed details to Ella Collins 'about a business deal he and Malcolm Jarvis had with an elderly, wealthy, white millionaire, named Paul Lennon, who would pay them to rub powder over his body'" (506). Although the project was commenced by Ella Collins in the late 1960s, it was completed by her adopted son, Rodnell Collins, the nephew of Malcolm X, in 1998. Since the poorly written book, which A. Peter Bailey played an important role in producing, is based primarily on Rodney's memories of what his mother told him that Malcolm X told her in the mid 1940s, it comes as no surprise that it is filled with factually incorrect information.

To cite a few examples, Collins claims that Francis "Sonny" Brown was arrested, sentenced, and imprisoned (45-46) when all sources, including Malcolm X himself, assert that he eluded the authorities (X 149; Marable 67). He asserts that Lennon was a millionaire when Marable has shown that there is no evidence that he ever became truly wealthy (65). The description of Malcolm's last night that is provided by Collins is demonstrably false. He claims that Malcolm put the children to sleep between midnight and 12:30 a.m., lay down with them and Betty for some time, spoke privately with Ella and Rodney in his car, expressed annoyance at Betty's obstinate position against moving from New York, drove off, and only arrived at his hotel in Queens, near the Kennedy Airport, many hours later (Collins 194). Ilyasah Shabazz, Malcolm's daughter, however, wrote

that her father only stayed briefly at the Wallaces, checked on the children, climbed in his car and drove away (Shabazz 12). She makes no mention that he stayed in his car talking to Ella and Rodney (Shabazz 12). Furthermore, as Rodney stresses himself, Malcolm was extremely nervous and concerned about an eminent assassination attempt (Collins 193). If, as Rodney claims, Ella would not even let Malcolm fetch his briefcase from his car out of fear for his safety (Collins 193), why would she and her son have a conversation with him in his car like sitting ducks? Collins' claim that Malcolm X spent his last night at a hotel in Queens, near Kennedy Airport (194), is certainly strange as all sources agree that he stayed at the Hilton in midtown Manhattan, a fact confirmed by numerous sources, including the eye-witness testimony of a judge. Collins' claim that Malcolm was at the Wallaces until approximately 1:00 a.m. or later simply does not make sense as he had dinner at the Hilton's Old Bourbon Steak House (Goldman 268; Perry 359; Marable 423). It was at approximately 10 pm, after Malcolm had returned to his room, that several Black Muslims appeared asking for his room number and were asked to leave by security (Goldman 268; Perry 360; Marable 423).

Due to the fact that it contains many discrepancies, echoes of the feud between Ella Collins and Betty Shabazz, and strong signs of editorial interpretation and recreation, *Seventh Child: A Family Memoir of Malcolm X* cannot be considered an entirely accurate and authoritative account of the life of Malcolm X. Since the author admits that he was encouraged to write the book to help provide for his family, his motivations were monetary, and nothing sells more than scandal. Consequently, *Seventh Child* should only be approached with a critical eye.

Besides failing to adopt a critical methodology, Marable appears to manipulate utterly innocent sources when explicitly incriminating ones are absent. At one point in his book, Marable mentions that Peter Goldman, the author of *The Death and Life of Malcolm X*, had described himself as belonging to a relatively small target group that Malcolm wanted to seduce (219). The sense of the word is clear from the context. Malcolm wanted to convince people of the rightful nature

of his cause. He wanted to attract them to his beliefs. By italicizing *seduce* in the citation, Marable suggests the second meaning of the word which means “to entice into sexual activity.” Such a reading is not only unwarranted; it is simply sick. In fact, the entire work is saturated with such homosexual innuendo. If anyone were foolish enough to follow in Marable’s footsteps, there would be no end to such insanity. After all, Goldman admitted in his “Foreword” that he “liked” Malcolm (xvi). Perhaps he “liked liked” Malcolm. Hint, hint... In the minds of many readers, such unwarranted readings manifest the mentality of a middle-schooler or, even worse, a dirty old man.

As history has taught us, smear campaigns against revolutionary leaders have always revolved around accusations of homosexuality, bestiality, adultery, cuckoldry, and brutal behavior of all sorts, towards both family members and friends. Such was the case with Karl Marx, Che Guevara, General José de San Martín, the Liberator of Argentina, Chile, and Peru, from Spanish rule, as well as Eva Perón, among scores of other victims. In the United States, virtually every African American leader or role model has suffered the same fate. The objective of smear campaign strategy is to lower everyone to the same level of immorality so as to prove that nobody has the moral authority to speak truth to power. This is an old tactic employed by secret service agencies in order to damage or destroy the reputation of a political opponent.

In order to support his thesis of the *Maricón* Malcolm, Marable goes to great length to demonstrate that Malcolm had little interest in marriage (144-145), that he was virtually pushed into proposing to Betty, that he had difficulty expressing love (164), and that he suffered from sexual problems throughout his marriage (147-150; 164; 194). Although Malcolm earnestly complained to Elijah Muhammad about problems with performance in a March 1959 letter, such heart-rending confessions do not suggest that he was a homosexual. On the contrary, they are indicators that Malcolm was merely a man who suffered from the same sort of problems that millions of heterosexual men suffer from. Considering that his sexual experience had been limited to prostitutes and women of ill-repute like

Sophia, the hustler Malcolm had only contented himself with seeking his own pleasure as opposed to granting it to others.

If Malcolm refrained from marriage for many years, it was because of his deep devotion to the Nation of Islam. His religious and political activities were the focus of his existence and occupied all of his waking hours. As he explained in his *Autobiography*, “I had always been very careful to stay completely clear of any personal closeness with any of the Muslim sisters. My total commitment to Islam demanded having no other interests, especially, I felt, no women” (225). Although many Muslim sisters were interested in the attractive and charismatic Malcolm, he made it clear to them that he was too busy (225). [I suppose that Marable-minded scholars will now question my own sexuality for acknowledging that Malcolm was a good-looking man]. Malcolm also admits that he had personal reasons for not marrying (226): none of which had anything to do with homosexual inclinations. As Malcolm explained, his problem was not lack of experience with women, but an excess of experience with the worst kinds of women (226). Having talked to too many prostitutes and mistresses, he had unresolved issues of trust (226). Furthermore, Elijah Muhammad himself had encouraged him to remain single so that he could devote all of his energies to spreading the Nation of Islam throughout the country (226).

Even after he married, on his own initiative, Malcolm was perpetually traveling, sleeping only two to three hours per night, subsisting on a single meal per day, while fueled with innumerable cups of coffee. Malcolm X was also plagued by a host of health issues triggered from his poor diet in prison and lack of competent medical attention. Considering that he was malnourished, suffered from severe stress, heart palpitations, and exhaustion, and that his wife was perpetually pregnant, a turn-off for most men, it makes perfect sense that Malcolm’s sexual performance was not always up to par. If Malcolm and Betty had some problems at some point, it does not mean that they were permanent.

Marable’s allegations that Malcolm was a homosexual seem inconsistent with his subject’s writing on the issue. As the author points out, Malcolm denounced the “homosexual perverts” he came across in prison and who got “job

changes whenever they wish to change or acquire new ‘husbands’” in a letter he wrote to the commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Corrections in 1950 (95). It is also completely incompatible with the ideology he embraced, espoused, and devoted his life to disseminating. As Malcolm X was well-aware, homosexuality is explicitly outlawed by the Qur’an, the *sunnah*, and the *shari‘ah*.

If Malcolm X was truly a homosexual, why did the Nation of Islam fail to mention this fact when they attempted to expose him as a hypocrite in *Muhammad Speaks*? Considering that he was under constant surveillance by the police, the FBI, and the CIA, and that authorities were determined “to do something about Malcolm” and destroy the “demagogue” that they so despised, it is inconceivable that they would have failed to obtain evidence regarding his alleged homosexuality. As Marable himself admits, the FBI “was frustrated in their attempts to find Malcolm’s weaknesses” (182). As one FBI agent made clear, Malcolm was a man of impeccable integrity and high moral character (139).

Even if Malcolm had some sexual contact with members of the same sex as a teenager, and there is no convincing evidence that he did, one could argue that he was not a homosexual for, in order to be so, one needs to be attracted to the members of one’s own sex, and to have acted upon it on numerous occasions. It is not unusual for young people to have some sort of contact with members of the same sex nor is it odd for drug-addicted hustlers to seek any means to survive. As far as Islam is considered, the sin is in the action. Even when acted upon, homosexuality is only proven in the *shari‘ah* through confession or the testimony of four witnesses to the actual act. Since individuals who make false accusations of homosexuality, adultery or fornication are subject to eighty lashes according to Islamic law, biographers should be careful not to impugn the honor and dignity of their Muslim subjects without compelling conclusive evidence. Finally, if the claims made by Perry and Marable could be proven, and they seem to be as solid as ashes in the wind, they would not alter anything for, as far as Islam is concerned, whatever happened prior to one’s conversion is fully forgiven. This, of course, is simply conjecture for, as has been shown, there is not a shred of credible evidence confirming that Malcolm X was a homosexual.

As Clayborne Carson stated in the *Malcolm X Files*, “the reliability” of Perry’s book “cannot be determined until its sources--particularly transcripts of interviews with Malcolm’s associates--are made available to other researchers” (49, note 3). In the collection of essays titled *In Our Own Image*, Arnold Rampersad also pointed out that “Perry’s way of weighing and using information is sometimes questionable” (121). According to Kenneth H. Williams, “the critical reviews that Perry’s book has received note that his sometimes bizarre interpretations of Malcolm combined with a lack of documentation limits the book’s value to serious Malcolm X scholarship” (Jenkins 441).

In *Making Malcolm: The Myth and Meaning of Malcolm X*, Michael Eric Dyson stated that “Perry’s portrait of Malcolm’s sex life forms a rhetorical low blow, simply reinforcing a line of attack against an already sexually demonized black leadership culture” (58-59). Because Perry is white, Dyson questioned whether he had the ability to interpret black experience (59). Since Perry demonstrated “neither sensitivity to nor knowledge about complex black cultural beliefs regarding gender and sexual difference” (58), Dyson dismissed the former’s psychobiography of Malcolm. When the very same claims were made by a black man like Manning, however, Dyson poured out praise for his biography. Such a *volte-face* can only be described as racially-motivated self-revisionism. For all intents and purposes, Marable’s biography of Malcolm is, in many regards, as reprehensible as the one produced by Perry. As Gregory P. Kane wrote in his 1991 review, “The line between a critical biography and a hatchet job is indeed a thin one. Bruce Perry may have crossed it.” It is thus disconcerting that a man like Marable would regurgitate the allegations that were so gullibly reported by Perry. People remember things wrong. Memories fade and falter. Falsehood, in the form of gossip, remains untrue, even if it has been repeated for more than half a century.

As if accusing Malcolm X of being a homosexual did not suffice, Marable alleges that he was unfaithful to his wife: with women of all things! The author intimates that Malcolm remained emotionally attached to Evelyn Williams, a former girlfriend, while he was married to Betty. Citing Louis Farrakhan as his

source, Marable claims that “Evelyn was never far from his mind. At times, his unhappiness with Betty was so profound that he considered reestablishing his love affair with Evelyn” (233). The author also writes that allegations that Malcolm was sleeping with Lynne Shifflett, the leader of his secular Organization of Afro-American Unity, “may have been grounded in truth” (393). Marable also suggests that, while in Geneva, Malcolm committed adultery with Fifi, a UN secretary and Swiss national with whom he had worked in Cairo (385). According to the author, “She met him at his hotel, chatting with him for hours and truly surprising him by saying that she ‘is madly in love with me and seems willing to do *anything* to prove it’” (385). When he returned to his hotel, at about 9 pm, Malcolm wrote that “Fifi was knocking on my door as I came up the stairs” (385). As Marable explains,

She joined him in his room and left a couple of hours later. Uncharacteristically, Malcolm did not record in his diary what transpired between the two of them; based on the diary, Fifi appears to be the only female he admitted to his private space during his entire time abroad. After her departure, Malcolm subsequently left the hotel and took a brief walk in the rain, ‘alone and feeling lonely...thinking of Betty.’ (385-86)

Although there is no evidence that any adulterous encounter took place, Marable concludes that “Malcolm’s hesitant diary entries about the night spent with Fifi in Switzerland suggest the possibility of a more intimate involvement” (393). Considering that Malcolm carried his diary around with him at all times, and knowing full well that his wife could and would have access to it, it makes little sense that Malcolm would have mentioned matters that could have incriminated him. Remember, this is the very detailed travel journal that Malcolm hoped to have published as a second book. If he wrote about Fifi’s meeting in his bedroom, it was because it was simply that: a business meeting. Furthermore, men who sleep with women in the late evening take a shower and go to bed. They do not wander in the rain, return to their rooms, and write in their diaries how lonely they feel and how much they miss their wives.

If anything, Malcolm's diary entries indicate just how faithful he was to his "beloved Betty" (v), the woman to whom he dedicated his autobiography. Despite claims that their relationship was merely a marriage of convenience, and that he viewed his wife as a "nuisance," Malcolm made his sentiments clear: "I love Betty. She's the only woman I ever thought about loving. And she's one of the very few--four women--whom I have ever trusted" (*Autobiography* 232). As Betty and her older daughters fondly recall, Malcolm was a warm, loving, and devoted husband and father (Clarke 132-143).

Marable also states that, during his last weeks, Malcolm had been "secretly involved" with Sharon 6X Poole, the eighteen-year old OAAU secretary (451). After returning from his trip to Africa, the author alleges that "Malcolm appears to have begun an illicit sexual affair with an eighteen-year-old OAAU secretary named Sharon 6X Poole. Little is known about her or about their relationship except that it appears to have continued up to Malcolm's death" (394). He even alleges, without an atom of evidence to support his claim, that "Sharon 6X may have joined him in his hotel room" at the New York Hilton on the night before his assassination (423). Although Malcolm X had denounced Elijah Muhammad for committing adultery with his young secretaries, and was involved in a court case against him, Marable suggests that he was a hypocrite who was engaging in the very same activity himself. If Sharon 6X did meet Malcolm, and it seems virtually certain that she did not, it was to talk business as Malcolm did all of his business from hotel rooms. It was in a room at the Hotel Theresa in Harlem that Malcolm headquartered the Muslim Mosque Inc. and the Organization of Afro-American Unity. However, Marable's chronology may not be entirely accurate. In fact, there are serious discrepancies in the various accounts of Haley, Grant, Goldman, Gallen and Grimes, as well as Perry, Clark, Marable and Collins, among others.

According to Marable, Malcolm dropped Betty off at the house of the Wallace family, stayed there for several hours, checked into the New York Hilton, paid for a single room, ate dinner at the hotel's restaurant, and returned to his room where he remained until the next day (222-423). As Russell J. Rickford

relates in *Betty Shabazz*, Malcolm did indeed drop Betty off at the Wallaces, where he spent a few hours talking quietly. During that time, he apologized to his wife for the hardship she had suffered and vowed that change was coming: “We’ll all be together. I want my family with me. Families shouldn’t be separated” (226). He also promised that he would no longer take long trips without her. Although Malcolm did check into the Hilton, where he put together his notes and rested for the rally at the Audubon Ballroom, Rickford claims that Malcolm spent the later part of the evening with James Campbell at the OAAU office in the Hotel Theresa (226). Although Malcolm was tense, he proudly announced that Betty was pregnant again and boasted that “Every time I look at her she gets pregnant” (226). If Malcolm worked late that night at the Hotel Theresa, it seems highly unlikely that he would have met Sharon 6X at the Hilton to swing on the chandeliers. Malcolm’s words and actions that evening do not reflect those of a man who was about to commit adultery on the eve of his own death.

When I contacted Rickford regarding his chronology, he regretted being unable to clarify my questions beyond the details he provided in the biography. As Rickford explained, “I am too far removed from the research at this point to recall those details or even to suggest where those answers might lie.” If, however, his chronology is correct, it would make the possibility of an adulterous encounter all the less likely. Even if the traditional chronology is correct, namely, that Malcolm left his wife and children at the Wallaces, went to the Hotel Theresa for a meeting, checked into the Hilton, sat down for supper at approximately 10 p.m., returned to his room, where he completed his answers for *al-Muslimoon*, spent the night, and checked out early next afternoon, the possibility of an erotic escapade seem highly implausible considering that his room was under constant surveillance for security reasons. According to Grimes, Malcolm remained locked in his room for the rest of the night (171). Although Marable was Rickford’s advisor and mentor, and he supports the book as “an important contribution to our understanding of Malcolm’s life and politics,” even he admits that his academic elder was mistaken: “I agree that his recounting of the rumor that Malcolm was

joined by an aide in his hotel room in that final night was perhaps improper and largely unnecessary.”

Besides the many missteps he made regarding Malcolm, Marable made another major *faux-pas* dealing with Sharon 6X Poole Shabazz and Linwood X Cathcart. In his biography, Marable claims that Sharon and Linwood were involved with each other at the time of Malcolm’s assassination. Since he claims that the Newark branch of the Nation of Islam was responsible for organizing Malcolm X’s murder, he suggests that Sharon 6X and Cathcart may have been in on the plot. As explosive as this murder allegation may be, Marable failed to follow up on his lead hoping, perhaps, that law enforcement would act upon his allegations and examine the connection the pair had with Malcolm. So far, the only response he received from his allegations is a \$50 million dollars lawsuit against his estate, the book’s publisher, Viking Press, and Columbia University launched by Linward X Cathcart, a former Minister of the Nation of Islam. Besides misspelling his name as “Linwood” instead of “Linward,” Marable is accused of deliberately ignoring the fact that, at the time of the murder, Poole was simply renting an apartment in the home of Cathcart, and that both were married to other people. Since accusing individuals of adultery is sufficient grounds for a defamation action, Marable should surely have sought to substantiate his claims prior to making such allegations.

Considering the gravity of Marable’s allegations, namely, that Cathcart and Shabazz were involved in Malcolm’s murder, and its serious legal ramifications, it is astonishing that the editors and attorneys working for the Viking Press allowed them to be published. Considering the amount of information available regarding Shabazz, and especially Cathcart, Marable could at least have attempted to present a more compelling case. He could have stressed the fact that Sharon supposedly sat down next to Cathcart on the fateful day and feigned not to know him despite evidence to the contrary. He could have insisted on how strange it was that Malcolm’s secretary was actually closely collected to Nation of Islam loyalists. Marable could also have pointed out that Cathcart was reported to have grinned and laughed while Malcolm was being shot. According

to Evanzz, the FBI's investigation indicated that "Linwood X" was involved in the murder of Malcolm X and that he was identified by a number of witnesses to the murder (492). The fact that he remains closely connected to both Sharon 6X Shabazz and Louis Farrakhan to this very day is also suggestive. I am not, like Marable, making any allegations that these two individuals were involved in any way in the assassination of Malcolm X. I am simply showing that Marable failed to exercise due diligence in making his case.

If we are to believe Marable, and it is becoming increasingly clear that we cannot, Malcolm was not only a homosexual and an adulterer, he was also a cuckold. When discussing the paternity suits brought against "the Final Messenger of Allah," Marable observes that: "All were the progeny of Elijah Muhammad, who had taken advantage of the weeklong Chicago MGT tutorials--such as the one Betty had attended--to select attractive and talented young women for service in the national headquarters' secretarial staff" (181). The author appears to imply that it was not only Malcolm's love interest, Evelyn Williams, who had been seduced by Elijah Muhammad, but Betty as well. After all, Elijah Muhammad had approved of Malcolm's marriage to Betty, saying that she was "a fine sister" (144). While Marable only implies that Elijah Muhammad claimed the privilege of *prima noctis* with Betty, he explicitly claims that she attempted to seduce his bodyguards, that she was having sex with Charles Kenyatta, Malcolm's right-hand man, who was also known as Charles 37 (379, 380, 393). According to Marable, Malcolm was aware that his wife was "tripping the light fantastic" and, although people were prepared to put Charles to death, Malcolm prevented his followers from terminating him (393). In the eyes of Marable, Malcolm was a perpetual pimp. Two decades before his break with the Nation, "he had posed as a pimp, hustling prostitutes in Harlem. Now, unwittingly, he had been maneuvered into becoming Elijah's pimp, even bringing the woman he had loved to be violated" (234). Like Perry, who failed to consider the credibility and motivation of their sources, Marable blindly accepted the allegations of individuals who had axes to grind.

Besides his apparent obsession with the thought that Malcolm might have been a homosexual, an adulterer, and a cuckold, Marable makes endless allegations about all aspects of his subject's life. In "The Legend of Detroit Red," the author sets out to prove that Malcolm was not the hard-core criminal that he portrayed himself to be. The entire argument is pointless. What is the standard for a hustler, a criminal, and a thug? Did Malcolm have a B.A. in Criminality? Did he have an M.A. in Misdemeanors? Perhaps, he had a Ph.D. in Pimping? How, one may ask, can Marable question Malcolm's claims over sixty years after the fact when Ted Poston, the veteran black journalist, failed to turn up anyone from Detroit Red's old street crowd while the man was still alive? In the late 1960s, Peter Goldman, an investigative journalist, also failed to uncover anything of substance about Malcolm's hustler years. Players come and go and are soon forgotten. Since he was his partner in crime, the testimony of Malcolm "Shorty" Jarvis does have weight in the matter. As Jarvis has shown in *The Other Malcolm*, Detroit Red was indeed a notorious criminal (35-52). Marable also alleges that Malcolm betrayed his fellow crew-members for which reason Shorty supposedly started to call him the "Green-Eyed Monster" (67, 71). Although he is not the most reliable person on the planet, Malcolm "Shorty" Jarvis corroborated the version of events related by Malcolm X. As Jarvis explained, "After his initial arrest, Malcolm was taken to Boston Police Headquarters. In his possession were two guns and two address books. While he was being photographed and fingerprinted, his address books were looked through and the names of the three girls and me were revealed" (52). Contrary to Marable's unfounded claims, Malcolm did not sell-out his friends.

In "The Hate That Hate Produced," Marable alleges that Malcolm was "uncritical" of Elijah Muhammad's contact with white supremacists (179). As his family members and close associates have confirmed, Malcolm X was always opposed to Elijah Muhammad's association with the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazi Party. Considering the precarious position in which he found himself during his last years in the Nation of Islam, Malcolm was simply not in a position to openly challenge Elijah Muhammad. As Ella and Rodnell Collins have

confirmed, Malcolm was outraged at NOI contacts with white supremacists (128). He urged his friends, the Alexanders, to publish an editorial attacking white supremacy to give pause to NOI officials who wanted to deal with them (128). Malcolm also wanted to leak a letter written by J.B. Stoner, the Imperial Wizard of the KKK, which discussed dealings with officials from the Nation of Islam. According to Rodnell Collins, “Malcolm wanted this letter published as part of an effort to possibly shame them from dealing with white supremacists” (128). Malcolm himself acknowledged that he had represented Elijah Muhammad in secret negotiations with the Ku Klux Klan in 1960 (Clark xi; *The Final Speeches*, 117) and virulently attacked the Nation of Islam for its close association and cooperation with white supremacists (*The Final Speeches* 117-18, 128, 174, 181).

Marable also intimates that Malcolm only turned against Elijah Muhammad when he learned that Evelyn Williams, a woman with whom he had been engaged at one point, had been impregnated by so-called prophet (181; 233). Citing his subject’s travel diary, Marable points out that Malcolm had wine with dinner while in Kenya (372), had a rum in Coke in Ghana, in an attempt to wake up (383), and went to a nightclub in Guinea, where he stuck to coffee and orange juice “because Guinea was an overwhelmingly Muslim country” (385). The accuracy of these statements is entirely unclear. Malcolm had a great sense of humor and may have punctuated his travel diary with jokes. Since he only had a superficial understanding of Islamic law, his travels in the Arab world, where many Muslims unfortunately drink alcohol, may have misled him to believe that it was not prohibited. Due to the severe stress and strain he was under, it is also conceivable that he consumed alcohol for medicinal reasons. In any event, these tiny tantalizing tidbits are tossed into the dish to spice things up. It is surprising that Marable did not seize the opportunity to denounce Malcolm as a habitual masturbator. After all, the man spent 12 years without having sex, and, according to Marable, only occasionally cheated on his wife after he married. Facetious remarks aside, many critical readers may conclude that Marable’s main objective was to undermine the integrity of his subject, to soil his name, and to drag him in the dust.

As a historian, Marable is entitled to present a complete profile of Malcolm. The author's aim to "go beyond the legend" (12) suggest that Malcolm has somehow been idealized. While many Muslims view Malcolm as a martyr, they do not view him as a religious scholar or a saint. Malcolm was an organic intellectual and a political activist who had a limited understanding of Islam. He had been a mainstream Muslim for less than one year before he was assassinated. As most of his Muslim admirers will admit, Malcolm had many shortcomings. Although he had his faults, as all of us do, Malcolm was a man of many admirable qualities and virtues, not to mention singular talent. As Peter Goldman put it, "he was neither saint nor sinner but a good and gifted man" (xvii). Unlike others, who keep their past under lock and key, Malcolm was an open book, a man who put everything on the table, who courageously confessed his shortcomings, and admitted to his mistakes. He readily admitted and duly detailed the illegal and immoral activities in which he had been involved prior to joining the Nation of Islam. As Steven Clark has said, Malcolm's speeches, interviews, and statements, manifest his "incorruptible honesty and revolutionary integrity" (xix). Or, in the words of Malcolm X: "my sincerity is my credentials" (*Malcolm X Speaks* 20).

While Marable is entitled to present evidence regarding Malcolm's personal life, he has the professional responsibility to ensure its accuracy. In this respect, Marable has fundamentally failed to adhere to the scientific method and the most basic of scholarly standards. Despite the enormous financial resources that were available to him, Marable made little to no effort to contact many of the key players in Malcolm's life in order to confirm his allegations. There is no evidence that he attempted to track down Malcolm's alleged adulterous lovers such as Lynn Shifflet, Fifi, and Sharon 6X Poole for verification. It is both irresponsible and unprofessional to blindly cite information without evaluating its authenticity. Sources need to be scrutinized. Claims need to be confirmed. References need to be cross-checked. And allegations need to be verified. Many of the sources used by Marable are dubious. He treats open enemies of Malcolm X as reliable witnesses. He was particularly proud of the fact that Louis Farrakhan

granted him an extraordinary nine-hour meeting, after which he granted him access to the Nation of Islam's archival material on Malcolm X (12).

Farrakhan, as most individuals are aware, was Malcolm's very nemesis. Even Elijah Muhammad viewed him as duplicitous (Clegg 340, note 11). It was Farrakhan himself who decreed that Malcolm was "worthy of death" (398). He viewed him as a "Judas" and a "hypocrite" and even depicted him as a devil (Strickland 175, Magida 83-85, Levinsohn 75-78, Curtis 58-59). Due to his ties to the NOI mosques in Harlem, Boston, and Newark, it comes as no surprise that "The name of Minister Louis Farrakhan surfaced during the murder investigation as a leader with ties to all three mosques" (Evanzz 491). In a 1971 speech, Farrakhan is reported to have stated that Malcolm X should be dug up and killed again for having slandered Elijah Muhammad. In a vitriolic speech, recorded on January 22, 1972, Farrakhan celebrated the murder of Malcolm X, praised his murderers as "fearless men," and ridiculed the "cowardice" of the helpless crowd who attempted to flee the Audubon Ballroom. In his infamous 1993 "Savior's Day" diatribe, the leader of the Nation of Islam appeared to boast about his involvement in the assassination of Malcolm X: "Was Malcolm your traitor or ours? And if we dealt with him like a nation deals with a traitor, what the *hell* business is it of yours? A nation has to be able to deal with traitors and cutthroats and turncoats." As Farrakhan himself admitted in 2009, he created the conditions that lead to the murder of Malcolm X. If Farrakhan provided such a long testimony to Marable, and granted him access to archival information from the Nation of Islam, it was certainly because he had ascertained that the author had no intention of presenting Malcolm in a positive light.

There are, of course, a few valuable contributions made by Marable. For example, he provides many details about Malcolm's parents and childhood which are not well known. He debunks Bruce Perry's assertion that Malcolm and his father Earl had both fire-bombed their own homes. He details Malcolm's travels through the Muslim world and discusses his contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood in Lebanon, Egypt and Gaza, as well as the PLO. The author conveys the sincerity of Malcolm's conversion to orthodox Islam and his rejection

of Elijah Muhammad's racist teachings. He also confirms that Shaykh Akbar Hasan, the rector of Al-Azhar University, gave Malcolm an *ijazah* authorizing him to teach Islam on August 15th, 1965 (365), and that the same institution provided him with a certificate establishing his credentials as an orthodox Muslim on September 16, 1965 (369).

The most intriguing aspect of the work is Marable's suggestion that Malcolm consciously attempted to emulate the example of Imam Husayn. The author speculates that:

As Malcolm became more aware of Islamic tradition in his last years, he probably learned about the third Shiite imam, Husayn ibn Ali, and his tragic murder. Husayn was the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, and the son of Ali ibn Abi Talib and Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad.

After the murder of Ali and the abdication of his older brother, Hasan, Husayn became the object of allegiance for many Muslims. At Karbala in 680 CE in what today is Iraq, Husayn and a small band of supporters were attacked by religious opponents; nearly all of them were killed or captured. Husayn died bravely and gloriously, so much so that his murder became central to the Shiite ethos of martyrdom, suffering, and resistance to oppression. The Shiite mourning observance of Ashura reenacts the tragedy as a passion play, in which participants engage in remorse and self-punishment over Husayn's assassination, and rededicate themselves to the struggle for freedom and justice. (430)

Although Malcolm was well-aware that his days were numbered and that the Nation of Islam had put a price on his head, he followed in the footsteps of Husayn and refused to flee death (430). Knowing that he would be targeted at any time, he loosened his security detail rather than tighten it, ordered that his bodyguards be disarmed, and invited his wife and children to witness what would be his final speaking engagement on that fateful February 21st, 1965. As Marable points out, "Perhaps, like Husayn, he wanted his death to be symbolic, a passion play representing his beliefs" (433).

While many Shi'ite Muslim converts from North America and the Caribbean have always viewed Malcolm as a modern-day Imam Husayn, and have even organized pilgrimages to his grave, they could never demonstrate that he had been influenced by Shi'ism. They always assumed that Malcolm had become a mainstream Sunni and perhaps even a Salafi due to his contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood and the Saudi leadership. Marable, unfortunately, made no attempt to substantiate his claims. The evidence, however, was staring him right in the face. As Marable mentions in his book, Malcolm participated in a gala reception for the Republic of Pakistan in Los Angeles in April of 1958 and spoke at a press conference at the Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood, "coordinated by Mohammad T. Mendi [sic] of Karbala, Iraq" (149). Although Marable gets his name wrong, it was "Mehdi" and not "Mendi," Dr. Mohammad T. Mehdi was Malcolm's Shi'ite connection.

Dr. Mohammad T. Mehdi (1928-1998), whom Marable fails to mention any more, was the father of the Arab movement in America. Born in Baghdad, Dr. Mehdi was the second son of al-Hajj 'Abd Allah Mehdi, the owner of a coffee shop in the sacred city of Karbala. The city of Karbala is the very birthplace of Shi'ism and is as Shi'ite as the Vatican is Catholic. That Dr. Mehdi was a Shi'ite is not subject to question. His middle name was "Taki," given to him in honor of Imam Muhammad al-Taqi, the Ninth Shi'ite Imam. His family name was "Mehdi," the title of the Twelfth Imam, and his older brother was named Mohammad Ridha, in honor of the Prophet and the Eighth Shi'ite Imam. According to family memory, his mother was named "Zohra" or "Zahra." While the first name refers to a star, a constellation, or a flower, the second name means "radiant" or "resplendent." If Dr. Mehdi's mother's name was "Zahra," then this was the title of the Prophet's daughter, Fatimah. It should be stressed that many Muslims give the name "Zohr" or "Zohra" to their daughters, with the intention of honoring Fatimah al-Zahra. Since they believe that there is only one Fatimah al-Zahra, and are under the impression that it is forbidden to use the titled al-Zahra to ordinary human beings, they use a variant of the name which draws from the same Arabic root.

Although Dr. Mehdi was an Arab culturally and linguistically, his mother came from Isfahan, Iran. While the Mehdi family could not confirm the place of birth of al-Hajj ‘Abd Allah Mehdi, both he and his wife appear to have been first cousins; hence, an Iranian origin seems likely. It should be stressed that, historically, the border between Iraq and Iran has been quite fluid. Consequently, 75% of the population of Karbala is composed of Persians. In places like Najaf, Karbala, and Kazimiyyah, 50% of inhabitants speak Persian at home. While in his late teens, Mohammad T. Mehdi’s family relocated to Baghdad where he graduated from the city’s High School of Commerce. Since he ranked second highest in Iraq’s national examinations, Mohammed Mehdi was granted a full Iraqi government scholarship allowing him to complete his studies at the University of California at Berkeley in 1948.

After graduating with an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Political Science, Dr. Mohammad T. Mehdi devoted his life to full-time political activism in the United States, standing up for the rights of Arabs, Muslims, and African Americans. In the process, he authored 10 books, including *An Arab Looks at America: A Nation of Lions, Chained, Peace in the Middle East, Peace in Palestine, Kennedy and Sirhan: Why?, Terrorism: Why America is the Target, Islam and Intolerance: A Reply to Salman Rushdie*, and edited *Palestine and the Bible*, a collection of essays from leading Christian and Jewish scholars. While virtually all of these books deal with politics, and provide scarce information on Dr. Mehdi’s religious ideas, *Islam and Intolerance* gives us a glimpse of the author’s Shi‘ism.

Written in response to the scandal caused by the publication of Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*, a work that made a mockery of the life of the Prophet, *Islam and Intolerance* shows several subtle signs of Shi‘ism. For example, he mentions Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, the Iranian Shi‘ite scholar, as a “great example” (7). While Dr. Mehdi mentions Sunni sources like Muslim and Bukhari, he also includes *Nahj al-Balagha* by Imam ‘Ali (10), a work rarely cited in a religious context by Sunni Muslims. When describing Islamic beliefs, Dr. Mehdi mentions the belief in one God and the belief in the prophets (17). When describing Islamic practices, he mentions the daily prayers, fasting, and the

pilgrimage to Mecca, along with paying the tithe, paying alms, and promoting the good (18). He also includes *jihad* (19).

Dr. Mehdi's breakdown of Islamic beliefs and practices is consistent, not with Sunni theology, which includes *shahadah*, *salah*, *sawm*, *hajj*, and *zakah* [the profession of faith, the daily prayers, fasting, the pilgrimage, and alms], but with Shi'ite theology, which consists of *tawhid*, *'adl*, *nubuwwah*, *imamah*, and *qiyyamah* [divine unity, divine justice, prophecy, imamate, resurrection], as well as *salah*, *sawm*, *hajj*, *zakah*, *khums*, *hajj*, *jihad*, *'amr bi al-ma'ruf*, *nahy an al-munkar*, *tawalli*, and *tabarri* [prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, alms, tithe, sacred struggle, promoting the good, prohibiting the wrong, attachment to the Prophet's family, and separation from the enemies of the Prophet's family].

As scholars of Sunnism and Shi'ism are well-aware, promoting the good is not considered one of the pillars of Islam for Sunni Muslims. Dr. Mehdi, however, stresses that "*Al-amru bil-Marouf wa-Nayhu anel-Munkar* (Enjoin people to do the right thing and refrain from doing the wrong) is a most important Islamic commandment in the service of the society and God" (18). This command is specifically cited as the sixth and seventh branch of religion for Shi'ite Muslims. It is also known that Sunnis only pay alms or *zakat* and that they do not tithe, namely, pay *khums*. For Shi'ites, the tithe represents the fifth branch of faith. While Sunnis do not consider *jihad* as one of the foundational precepts of their faith, it is ranked sixth for Shi'ites. Nonetheless, in an example of historical irony, the opponents of Islam and those who are misinformed about the subject consider *jihad* as distinctive trait of the Sunnis as a result of the events of 9/11. And, of course, they consider *jihad* to be synonymous with terrorism. While Dr. Mehdi may have been intentionally or inadvertently hazy on the foundations and branches of faith, excluding divine justice [*'adl*], the Imamate [*imamah*], *tawalli* [attachment] and *tabarri* [detachment], his understanding of Islam was clearly Shi'ite in scope.

Further evidence of Shi'ite influence on the ideas of Dr. Mehdi are manifest in his views on the earliest converts to Islam, *ijtihad*, Islamic unity, the succession of the Prophet, and the various schools of jurisprudence in Islam.

Although, according to Shi'ites, 'Ali was the first male to embrace Islam, traditional Sunni sources often cite Abu Bakr as the first man to convert, dismissing 'Ali due to the fact that he was a teenager. Dr. Mehdi, however, presents the traditional Shi'ite view on the subject: "The early supporters of the new Prophet included his wife, Khadija, and 'Ali, his future son-in-law" (24). He thus gives precedence to 'Ali over Abu Bakr. When speaking about the sources from which Muslim derive their law, Dr. Mehdi mentions *ijtihad* which he describes as "personal judgment if there is no law to cover a new situation" (27). As Dr. Mehdi explains, "This latter source of law is mostly used by Shii Muslims even though the Sunnis are increasingly using it nowadays to meet the demands of modern life" (27). When speaking of the two main communities of Muslims, Dr. Mehdi places the Shi'ites first, despite the fact that they are a minority: "The Shiis (about 15%) and Sunnis (85%) of the Muslim world population" (27). For the sake of Islamic unity, he seeks to minimize differences between both bodies of believers as opposed to accentuate them. As Dr. Mehdi explains, all Muslims "are agreed on the basic principles of Islam: One God, Muhammad is His last Prophet, the Holy Quran is the revelation of God to Muhammad" (27). Demonstrating the type of tolerance that is rarely found by Sunni writers on the subject, Dr. Mehdi objectively presents both the Sunni and Shi'ite positions regarding the succession of the Prophet without many any value judgments: "The Sunnis point to an election which took place after the death of the Prophet (632 A.D.) in which Abu-Bakr became the Khalifa (the successor) and the Shiis question the legitimacy of that election and maintain that the Prophet had assigned Ali to become his successor. But these are political disagreement, not religious" (27-28). When speaking of the successors of the Prophet, Dr. Mehdi is inclusive as opposed to exclusive, mentioning both Caliphs and Imams (16). Dr. Mehdi also stresses that there are five major schools of *fiqh* in Islam as opposed to four: "There are five schools of thought in Islam, Shafei, Hanbali, Maliki, Hanafi and Jafari with minor disagreement as to Islam, the religion, and somewhat serious disagreement as to its politics" (28).

Since Dr. Mehdi was an Arab nationalist and a modernist, who believed in the division between Mosque and State, he viewed religion mainly as an identity marker. He identified himself as an Arab and as a Muslim and avoided encouraging sectarian strife. His Shi'ite background, however, may have served his political interests when he traveled to Lebanon in December of 1986 and again in February of 1987 as part of a delegation from the Nation Council on Islamic Affairs which sought the release of American hostages. Since the hostages were held by pro-Iranian Islamists, and the only Muslim leaders who could place any pressure on the kidnappers were Shi'ites, it makes sense that Dr. Mehdi's Shi'ism served as a sign of legitimacy. As a result, Dr. Mehdi's delegation met with Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah, the future Shi'ite source of emulation, as well as Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shamseddine, the Head of the Supreme Islamic Shi'ite Council. A skilled diplomat, Dr. Mehdi urged the release of the hostages on the basis of Islamic and humanitarian grounds. While Shamseddine had no direct influence over the kidnappers, he pledged that he would help Dr. Mehdi and Dale Shaheen to seek the release of the foreigners (*Houston Chronicle*).

Although he was not particularly devout religiously, Dr. Mehdi was extremely devout politically (Mehdi, "On being an American Muslim"). Fearless and outspoken in the face of injustice, he was considered a formidable foe by his adversaries. As Curtiss relates, "In an early encounter, Zionist toughs ambushed him from behind and, in an apparent attempt to cripple or kill him, broke his legs and fractured his spine. However, as soon as he could walk again, he was back confronting his opponents before the cameras and on the picket line." According to Arab officials, the attack was perpetrated by six terrorists from the Jewish Defense League (Sobel 104). Clearly, Dr. Mohammad T. Mehdi may have been remembered as the Arab-American Malcolm X.

To all appearances, neither Malcolm X nor Dr. Mohammad Taki Mehdi received adequate protection from the authorities. This lack of security, among other reasons, certainly led to the assassination attempt in question. If the US government considered Malcolm guilty of treason, and considered revoking his

citizenship, it regularly refused citizenship to M.T. Mehdi. It took until 1982 when a female judge ruled that although his activities were anti-Israeli, he never showed any anti-American intent and should be granted citizenship. And he was. He made himself a t-shirt which said, in big bold letters, "Citizen Mehdi."

The first meeting between Malcolm and Mehdi, the two dynamic leaders who were famous for their controversial sound bites, took place at a conference in April of 1958. Seeking to broaden its appeal and increase its legitimacy among Muslims, the Nation of Islam decided to celebrate Third Pakistan Republic Day (Evanzz, *The Messenger* 185). The main speakers at the event were Malcolm X and Dr. Mohammad T. Mehdi, the head of the Arab Information Center, Pakistani government officials and students, as well as several Black Muslim ministers from the West Coast (185-86). In his speech, Dr. Mehdi argued that peace was not possible in the Middle East:

If the Zionists, as they claim, have not forgotten Palestine over the last 2,000 years, it is reasonable to assume that the Arab refugees of Palestine, who were born in Palestine... will not forget their home. The return of the Arab refugees, as resolved by the United Nations, will be the first vital condition for peace. (qtd. Evanzz 186)

Besides stressing the right to return, Dr. Mehdi denounced "the complete control the Zionists have over the media of communication in America" (186). Although he claimed that he was merely speaking on behalf of Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm seems to have taken Dr. Mehdi's lead and concurred that:

It is asinine to expect fair treatment from the white press since they are all controlled by Zionists... Arabs must--if they are to escape Atomic death and destruction--make an effort to reach the millions of people of color in America who are related to Arabs by blood. (qtd. Evanzz 186; and partially in Lincoln 169)

While both men would be labeled as anti-Semites for the rest of their lives, they always distinguished between Jewish people and Zionists. Although the aforementioned information was reported in the April 10, 1958 edition of the *Los Angeles Herald Dispatch*, it is also found in Malcolm's FBI. Further details about

the conference, and the contact between Malcolm X and Dr. Mehdi, are also found in Malcolm's FBI file. Agents reported that:

The "Los Angeles Herald-Dispatch" of March 27, 1958, carried an article captioned, "Moslems Celebrate Third Pakistan Republic Day in Los Angeles." Contained in this article was a photograph captioned, "East Meets West," which reflected photographs of MOHAMMAD AFZAL UL-HAQ FARUQUI, leader of the Pakistani Students Association, University of Southern California, Mr. Malcolm X, follower of the spiritual leader of Islam in the Western world, ELIJAH MOHAMMAD, and the Honorable ALMAD SHAFFI, Pakistan Republic Day speaker. The article reflected SHAFFI was First Class Magistrate from Lohore, Pakistan.

The "Los Angeles Herald-Dispatch," in its issue of April 10, 1958, carried an article captioned, "Sees Aggressive Zionism as Threat to World Peace." A photograph with this article showed publisher S. ALEXANDER, Mr. MOHAMMAD MEDHI, and Mr. Malcolm.

The article reflected MEHDI headed the Arab Information Center on the West Coast with offices in San Francisco. The article reflected that in a press conference held at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel the preceding Monday, Mr. MEHDI told the press that there is no real conflict between the Arabs and the Jews but the conflict is between Arabs and aggressive Zionists. The article reflected Mr. MALCOLM X was present at this conference. (NY 105-8999: 26-27)

Besides the *Los Angeles Herald Dispatch*, the event was also covered by another African American newspaper, the *Amsterdam News*. On May 3, 1958, the New York paper published an article titled "Arab Director, Malcolm X Hit US Press, Radio, TV." Despite the fact that neither of the two men was ever

associated with violence, they were both the subject of surveillance by intelligence agencies.

While Malcolm's FBI file is voluminous, the FBI sent a surprisingly thin file on Mohammed Mehdi when a Freedom of Information Act request was submitted by his daughter, Anisa Mehdi. Since practically everything was blacked-out, it provides virtually no information. Considering the flimsy nature of the file, there is little doubt that the FBI withheld files which they felt could not be released at the time. It may take decades until all informers, assets, and agents have passed away, until a full disclosure will be made.

Although Marable gives the impression that the men had only met once, the little-known fact is that Dr. Mehdi maintained in contact with Malcolm until the latter's martyrdom, a fact confirmed by his ex-wife, Beverlee Turner, his daughter, Anisa Mehdi, and his friend and colleague, al-Hajj Ghazi Khankan. Although Ella Collins paid a portion of Malcolm's pilgrimage to Mecca, it was Dr. Mehdi who had made all of the arrangements through his connections in the Middle East. While the relationship between the two activists has been overlooked by researchers, Curtiss reports that "Dr. Mehdi also played a little-known but key role in the history of Islam in America when he arranged for Malcolm X to make a first and life-changing pilgrimage to Mecca. It changed Malcolm X's thought when he realized that there was no racism in Islam."

Besides Curtiss, the only other source that mentions the impact of Dr. Mehdi on Malcolm X is titled "Black Muslims: The Useful' [spic] Heretics of Islam" by Alan J. Weberman, a former activist in the Jewish Defense Organization, a militant revisionist Zionist organization associated with acts of violence. As this author explains, "In 1964, Malcolm X left the Nation of Islam to found Muslim Mosque, Incorporated. Malcolm, under the guidance of Mohammad T. Mehdi, had visited mosques in the Middle East and had embraced orthodox Islam." While it is possible that Malcolm met with Shi'ites while in Lebanon or Kuwait, the most likely person to have presented him with the message of Imam Husayn was Dr. Mohammad T. Mehdi.

Unlike Marable, who makes many allegations without foundation, I contacted Dr. Mehdi's former wife, daughter, and close colleague in order to verify the claim that Malcolm X may have sought to emulate the example of Imam Husayn. The first person I contacted was Anisa Mehdi, the daughter of Dr. Mehdi, and a well-known journalist, film director, and Muslim activist. The first thing I sought to verify was whether Dr. Mehdi and Malcolm X, who had spoken at a press conference in 1958, had remained in contact, and whether it was true that he had organized the latter's pilgrimage to Mecca.

Anisa informed me that one of her proudest possessions was a photo of her father and brother Malcolm taken at the 1958 press conference. She described it as a fabulous photo which showed two socially committed young men. For her, the coming together of Dr. Mehdi and Malcolm X marked the beginning of the latter's introduction to universal Islam. In the 1950s, Anisa explained, Muslims were very much segregated in the United States. Arabs and Asians kept to themselves while African Americans attached themselves to sects of questionable orthodoxy. For Anisa, the photo of Dr. Mehdi and Malcolm X represents an effort by an Arab Muslim and a Black Muslim to reach across the line.

Anisa confirmed that her father was particularly proud that he had helped Malcolm make the *hajj* and was fond of pointing out his participation in bringing him into the fold of mainstream Islam. Although, as a journalist, she would normally require documented proof in the form of letters or receipts of some sort in order to confirm that her father made the arrangements for Malcolm's *hajj*, she trusts and accepts his word. Consequently, if Dr. Mehdi helped organize Malcolm's *hajj*, one can only deduce that the men had maintained contact from 1958 to the latter's death in 1965. Since Dr. Mehdi was a man of impeccable integrity, I see no reason to call into question his claims. As Anisa explained, her father viewed the conversion of Malcolm to mainstream Islam as his earliest and greatest accomplishment.

Although Anisa Mehdi does not remember that her father professed Shi'ism publicly, she pointed out several Shi'ite traits that her late father possessed. She stressed that he always spoke of five holy cities in Islam: Mecca,

Medina, Jerusalem, Najaf, and Karbala, whereas Sunnis typically speak only of the first three. He once took the family to Iraq to perform the pilgrimage to the tombs of Imam ‘Ali and Imam Husayn. He also taught his daughters that they descended from the Prophet. While Anisa found this hard to believe at the time, she told me that “If he said that we are, then I guess that we are.” She also pointed out that her father was a strong advocate of *ijtihad* or interpretation and application of Islamic law to changing times and circumstances. Although Sunnis closed the doors of *ijtihad* in the 10th century, it has always remained a living practice among Shi‘ite scholars. Since he worked with Sunni and Shi‘ite diplomats from around the Arab world, Dr. Mehdi was an indefatigable advocate of Islamic unity. As a girl, Anisa once asked her father: “*Baba*. What are we?” Her father had responded: “We are Muslims. *Khalas*.” Since Shi‘ites were few and far between in the US in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and all the mosques belonged to Sunnis, her father may have wished to downplay differences between Sunnism and Shi‘ism. Dr. Mehdi’s daughter explained to me that her father’s most characteristic Shi‘ite trait was his deep commitment to social justice. She specifically characterized her dad as a person who defied the established order. When asked whether she believed that her father shared the story of Imam Husayn with Malcolm X, Anisa expressed that he may very well have done so. In order to facilitate my research, and to give credence to my claims, Anisa was kind enough to put me in contact with her mother, Beverlee Ethlyn Turner, and her father’s friend and colleague, the outspoken Ghazi Khankan.

The Director of Interfaith Affairs and Communications at the Islamic Center of Long Island and Executive Director of the Council on American Islamic Relations, New York Office, al-Hajj Ghazi Y. Khankan has been a leading Islamic activist in the US since his arrival in the country in 1954. A close associate of Dr. Mehdi for 40 years, the Syrian-born Khankan confirmed that his colleague had met with Malcolm X in 1958. According to Khankan, Dr. Mehdi encouraged Malcolm to go to Mecca and to meet more mainstream Muslims as opposed to dealing mainly with African Americans belonging to Elijah Muhammad’s group. According to Khankan, Dr. Mehdi relocated from San

Francisco, where he had been working at the Arab Information Center, to New York where he became very active working with the African American community in New York. As Khankan explained, Dr. Mehdi formed part of an Arab-African American Relations Committee which aimed at improving relationships between both communities with the hope of bringing more blacks into Islam. It may have been precisely through this channel that Dr. Mehdi and Malcolm X maintained in contact.

Although unbeknownst to many, Malcolm's transition into universal Islam did not occur overnight during his trip to Mecca: it was part of a gradual process which took place during the final years of his life. Disillusioned with the Nation of Islam, Malcolm had started seeking out mainstream Muslims, including Dr. Mahmoud Youssef Shawarbi, the Director of the Islamic Association in the United States and Canada, Wallace Muhammad, and, apparently, Dr. Mohammad T. Mehdi as well. Not only did Malcolm X approach Dr. Shawarbi at the Islamic Cultural Center of New York for a letter of recommendation to make the *hajj*, he sought him out because he wanted to learn more about mainstream Islam (Jenkins 504). Malcolm actually attended several sessions in which he learned more about Islamic orthodoxy (504). Osman Ahmed, a friend of Malcolm X, confirmed that the latter used to pray at the Islamic Cultural Center of New York:

I met Malcolm quite a number of times at the Islamic center on Riverside Drive. After the prayers, he used to sit down with me and Dr. Mahmoud Shawarbi, the director of the center, and talk about different aspects of Islam, since we thought their beliefs in the Nation of Islam were incorrect. So his association with orthodox Muslims in fact started much earlier than his pilgrimage to Mecca. (Strickland 170)

Since Dr. Mehdi was transferred to the New York office of the Arab Information Center, and was an active leader of the Muslim community, he regularly attended the Islamic Cultural Center of New York. It is thus perfectly plausible that Malcolm X came into continued contact with Dr. Mehdi through the Arab Information Center and the Islamic Cultural Center of New York.

Although the subject requires more study, it seems that Dr. Mehdi had a considerable impact on the religious and political ideology of Malcolm X. In fact, when we compare the writings and declarations of Malcolm X, we find many echoes of Mohammad T. Mehdi. Malcolm, for example, is famous for the proclamation: "I have sworn upon the altar of Allah, against all tyranny in the minds of men, freedom by any means necessary." Interestingly, the masthead of Dr. Mehdi's Action Committee on Arab-American Relations quoted Jefferson's words: "I have sworn upon the altar of God, eternal hostility against any form of tyranny over the mind of man" (Haiek 194). Since Dr. Mehdi was employing this slogan prior to Malcolm's famous speech, it suggests that the African American was inspired by his Arab American counterpart.

Likewise, Malcolm X's views on Zionism, as expressed in his *Autobiography*, his speeches, and especially his article on "Zionist Logic" suggest that he was schooled on the subject by Dr. Mehdi. Since the Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam actually admired Zionism (Marable 367), Malcolm's attitude towards this political movement seems to have stemmed in part from his contact with Dr. Mehdi. As an independent activist, Dr. Mehdi was not supported by Syria or Egypt and support from Saudi Arabia fizzled out in the 1970s or 1980s. As Anisa Mehdi explained to me,

He did not support 'the Arab lobby,'--the little of which there may have been--because he saw them as ineffectual. He was disappointed with most of the Arab regimes for their lack of support for Palestine and for their focus on weapons build-up instead of information dissemination here in the USA.

Echoing Dr. Mehdi's attitude towards the Arab lobby, Malcolm acknowledged that "The Arabs are poor at public relations. They say *insha' Allah* [if God will its] and then wait; and while they are waiting the world passes them by" (qtd. Marable 310, note 537). He made the same comment in his *Autobiography*, where he stated that "That Arabs said '*insha' Allah*' ('God willing') -- then waited for converts" (343). Like Dr. Mehdi, Malcolm believed that "with improved public relations methods the number of new converts turning

to Allah could be turned into millions” (345). In his *Travel Diaries*, Malcolm stressed “the necessity of modernizing the methods to propagate Islam, and project an image that the mind of the modern world can understand” (qtd. Marable 310, note 537). Like Dr. Mehdi, the post-Mecca Malcolm also stressed that he was not anti-American or un-American (Marable 369, 394) and that any political wars had to be waged, and won, in Washington, at the White House, and in New York, at the United Nations. As Dr. Mehdi eloquently expressed, “The road to the liberation of Palestine leads through Washington.”

Besides his ideological influence on Malcolm X, instilling in him notions of nationalism and opposition to Zionism, Dr. Mehdi caused his African-American colleague to contemplate the issue of race and color. Since Dr. Mehdi was very much a white man according to American standards, Malcolm X was forced to confront his own prejudices and stereotypes. In fact, Malcolm’s meeting with this white, Arab, Muslim, activist of Persian origin, seems to have started the process of self-reflection and study which culminated in his conversion to universal Islam during his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1964 and his rejection of racism. Although he was Caucasian, Dr. Mehdi always insisted that he was neither white nor black but a human being. Dr. Mehdi was very much one of those Muslims who, although white on the outside, were certainly not white on the inside, if by white we refer to the mentality associated with racist Americans. When Malcolm X spoke of his experience in Mecca, where he mingled with Muslims of every color and complexion, as well as his newfound appreciation for human diversity, he expressed himself in terms that were regularly employed by Dr. Mehdi.

Despite the significant role that Mohammad T. Mehdi appears to have played in Malcolm’s religious and political development, this fascinating fact was largely unknown outside of a small circle of family members, close friends, and colleagues. Having confirmed the claims of al-Hajj Khankan, I proceeded to contact Dr. Mehdi’s former wife, and the mother of three of his daughters, Beverlee Ethlyn Turner, whom, I was told by Anisa and al-Hajj Khankan, might have more information on the subject. Although the couple eventually divorced,

Dr. Mehdi and Beverlee Turner, were married from 1953 to 1980. If anyone had intimate knowledge of Dr. Mehdi's ideology, it was his former wife, who had lived with him and shared his innermost thoughts for 27 years. Like her daughter, Anisa, and Mr. Khankan, Beverlee, who remarried and bears the name Bolton, confirmed that Dr. Mehdi often mentioned how he had arranged the pilgrimage that Malcolm made to Mecca. When I mentioned that her daughter, Anisa, never recalled that her father overtly stated that he was Shi'ite, Beverlee assured me that she must have forgotten. Beverlee categorically stated that "Mohammad was a Shi'ite." "He said it all the time," she insisted, "He always said he was Shi'ite." She related to me that her father, a Baptist Minister, asked Dr. Mehdi about the difference between Sunnism and Shi'ism. According to Beverlee, Dr. Mehdi explained that "The Shi'ites were the ones who refused to accept the status quo." According to Beverlee, "Mohammad always made it clear that he was a Shi'ite." When I asked her whether she believed that her former husband could have conveyed the martyrdom of Imam Husayn to Malcolm X, she stated that that was exactly the type of story that he would have shared. "He was always telling that story," she said. "He used to teach it to his daughters when they were young."

The similarities between Malcolm X and Imam Husayn are certainly evident to all informed readers. Like Imam Husayn, Malcolm X always knew that his destiny was violent death. Despite the repeated pleas of friends and family to remain in Medina, Imam Husayn marched off towards martyrdom in Karbala. Despite the repeated pleas of his friends and family, Malcolm X refused to remain in Africa and the Middle East and returned to the US to fearlessly face his foes. If, as written history and oral tradition explains, Imam Husayn rose up to "command the good and forbid the wrong," it is quite possible that Malcolm was following the same line of thought when he raised his voice in defense of human rights and dignity. As el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz stated himself a mere two days before his death: "It's a time for martyrs now, and if I am to be one, it will be for the cause of brotherhood" (*The Final Speeches* 231).

Like Imam Husayn, who, according to history, offered himself as a pure sacrifice in a confrontation that pitted 70 of his friends and family against forces

numbering 40,000 soldiers, Malcolm X prohibited pat-downs during his final appearance, instructed his bodyguards to disarm themselves, and ordered them to stand away from the podium. Evidently, knowing he would die, he wanted to avoid casualties. This being the case, he effectively offered himself as an innocent, defenseless, victim. In the example of Imam Husayn, Malcolm X did not seek death; he simply did not flee from it. In his “Systematic Reflection on Martyrdom,” Leonardo Boff, the Brazilian theologian, said the following concerning this type of martyrdom:

In the first place, martyrdom is possible because there are many people who prefer to sacrifice their lives than to be unfaithful to their own convictions. For a martyr, not everything is acceptable or worthwhile. Situations may occur in which a person’s conscience may require them to accept persecution and the sacrifice of life in testimony of the truth.

In the second place, martyrdom is possible because there are persons or instances which reject warnings or condemnation: they persecute, torture, and kill. Such a fact reveals that decadence remains the order of the day... At times, instruments of domination and falsehood can reach such a point that submission to them would imply the negation or denial of God. In such circumstances, the affirmation of God, the truth and justice, can only be maintained, without treason or sin, by enduring persecution and martyrdom... History is filled with martyrs. Jesus of Nazareth belongs to this tradition of martyrdom. Since it follows in the footsteps of Christ, the Church not only has martyrs, but is a Church of Martyrs. Martyrdom belongs to the true concept of the Church...

If the death of Imam Husayn marked an official break between Sunnism and Shi‘ism, Malcolm X may have believed that his death would represent the decisive break between the Nation of Islam and mainstream Islam. If Imam Husayn died defending what he considered to be original Islam and opposing what he viewed as innovation, Malcolm X may have proceeded in the same way, dying in the defense of universal Islam and in opposition of heresy. In short, as

Benjamin Karim believes, the attempts on Malcolm's life demonstrated that the Nation of Islam was not Islamic, but Satanic (186). Like Imam Husayn, Malcolm appears to have offered himself as a martyr in the presence of his beloved family members and friends, having been betrayed by many of those who had professed to be his most devoted followers.

Although Malcolm X wrote that he was striving "to live the life of a true Sunni Muslim" (303) in an article that was published on August 25, 1964, in the *Egyptian Gazette*, an ideological evolution may have occurred during the final six months of his life. If, and this is a big if, Malcolm consciously sought to follow in the footsteps of Imam Husayn, that would, in and of itself, make him a *de facto* Shi'ite. While he may not have professed Shi'ism verbally, he may very well have embodied it through his actions, leading him to offer his life for the cause of Allah, emulating the example of Imam Husayn. Were other evidence to surface supporting this assertion, namely, independently verified facts from other sources, our understanding of Malcolm X would be radically altered. Malik Shabazz could then be viewed, not only as a Muslim martyr, but as a Shi'ite Muslim martyr, and a modern-day Husayn-figure from the Western world.

While these findings are not conclusive, they are nevertheless stronger and more plausible than the conjectures made by Marable, Perry, and others, concerning Malcolm's homosexual and adulterous inclinations. Compared to Marable and company, who make so much out of so little conjectural evidence, the evidence that Malcolm X was influenced by the message of Imam Husayn is stronger. This is certainly not a sectarian conclusion since my point is that Malik Shabazz was an even greater figure than we all thought. Using his own blood as fertilizer, he certainly sought to spread the seeds of unity; namely, the need to overcome the futile differences that separate human beings so that they can all march together along the most elevated spiritual path. In particular, he can serve as an example of a person who sought to bridge the Sunni-Shi'ite divide.

Despite occasional insight, and a few facts here and there, Manning Marable's biography provides little new information on the life of Malcolm X and is mainly reinvented from previous works. Had the work been properly edited,

with all the gossip and rumors removed, the work would have made a contribution to scholarship in the field. Since the work seems to have been rushed into print, without any proper peer-review having been conducted, certain segments of the work are as reliable as the *The Inquirer*. Although it is Marable that is under attack as the author of the book, it really makes one wonder whether he actually authorized the inclusion of unverified rumors and gossip in an academic book. According to Ilyasah Shabazz, the daughter of Malcolm X, “Zaheer ‘Ali,” Marable’s chief research assistant, “didn’t know that these kinds of things were going to be included in that book” (Martin).

What role, then, did Wendy Wolf, the editor of Viking, play in the production of the book and what was her motivation in including allegations that Malcolm X was a homosexual, a cuckold, an adulterer, and *an anti-Semite*? For Alfred M. Lilienthal, Jewish author and anti-Zionist activist, the answer appears evident. As he explains in *The Zionist Connection II*: “Many of the largest book publishers, including Knopf, Random House, Holt, Liverwright, Viking Press, Simon and Schuster, Van Nostrand Reinhold, and Lyle Stuart are Jewish-owned, directly or by Jewish-controlled interests” (220). Is Malcolm the victim of a Zionist smear campaign for the fact that he dared defy Israel? Recall that it was the Viking Press that commissioned and published Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* and which rejected Mohammad T. Mehdi’s *Islam and Intolerance: Reply to Salman Rushdie*.

Since, in some regards, the work resembles more sensationalism than scholarship, Marable’s work has mainly benefited the enemies of Malcolm X who have eagerly seized upon his slanderous statements. These very enemies are having a field day spreading the falsehood they were fed by Marable and his predecessor Perry. Articles accusing Malcolm of being a homosexual, a rapist, an adulterer, a cuckold, and a misogynist have proliferated in the media and on the internet without their authors ever questioning the validity of these all too convenient accusations. The most vicious of these, titled “Malcolm X Exposed as a Homosexual Rapist and Prostitute,” is published by the Jewish Task Force of Fresh Meadows, New York, which claims to be “Fighting to Save America and

Israel from Islamic Terrorism.” Some scholars and authors have even suggested that, were Malcolm alive, he would have become a leading gay rights activist. Honestly, now: Malcolm X, at the head of a gay pride parade? Give me a break. Increasingly, it seems that even the gay community wants to claim the complicity of the handsome red-headed Muslim revolutionary and internationalist on the basis of hearsay from admittedly unreliable sources with questionable agendas.

While the mass media has printed dozens of articles and reviews praising Marable’s arguably biased biography, these very media outlets have refused to print works which are critical of the biographer’s methodology and unverified claims. Such was the case with Karl Evanzz scathing review which was rejected by *The Root*. As Jared A. Ball has suggested, far from being a “meticulous...portrait” and “definitive” biography, “*Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*” is itself a reinvention, or worse.” For Todd Stevens Burroughs, the book seems to have been written by a committee, lacks sufficient primary research, and appears to have been hastily completed as Marable’s condition deteriorated (Prince).

While the case against Malcolm is as soft as sand, the case against Marable is as solid as steel. Were both the biographer and his subject alive today, Malcolm X would certainly be able to take Manning Marable to court on the grounds of slander, libel, and defamation of character. Although Malcolm X will long be remembered by Muslims and human rights activists, how, then, will Marable be remembered? Will he be remembered as an Ivory Tower academic who went too far in his attempt to humanize his subject? Or, will he be remembered as an Uncle Tom academic who took a perverse pleasure in emasculating a martyred man? For Karl Evanzz, the judgment is already in. As he eloquently expressed, Malcolm X was “a black panther of a man. By contrast, Marable was just another paper tiger.” As for the allegations that Malcolm X was a homosexual, an adulterer, a cuckold, and a misogynist, among other atrocious accusations, I do not believe it and I do not buy it. And that is precisely what I would advise other academics to do: borrow the book; do not buy it. Like Bruce Perry’s *Malcolm: The Life of a Man who Changed Black America*, Manning

Marable's *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* represents the second assassination of Malcolm X: an assassination of character.

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